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GAMEFAN

NEXT GENERATION VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 4
APRIL 1997

FINAL FANTASY VII



PLAYSTATION EXCLUSIVE:
RAISE A CHALICE!
Castlevania
...HAS RETURNED!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

TAIL OF THE SUN
RALLY CROSS
WILD ARMS
RAYSTORM
CYBERBOTS
MANX TT
DUKE NUKEM
BLAST CORPS
ROBOTRON X
DARK RIFT
HEXEN 64

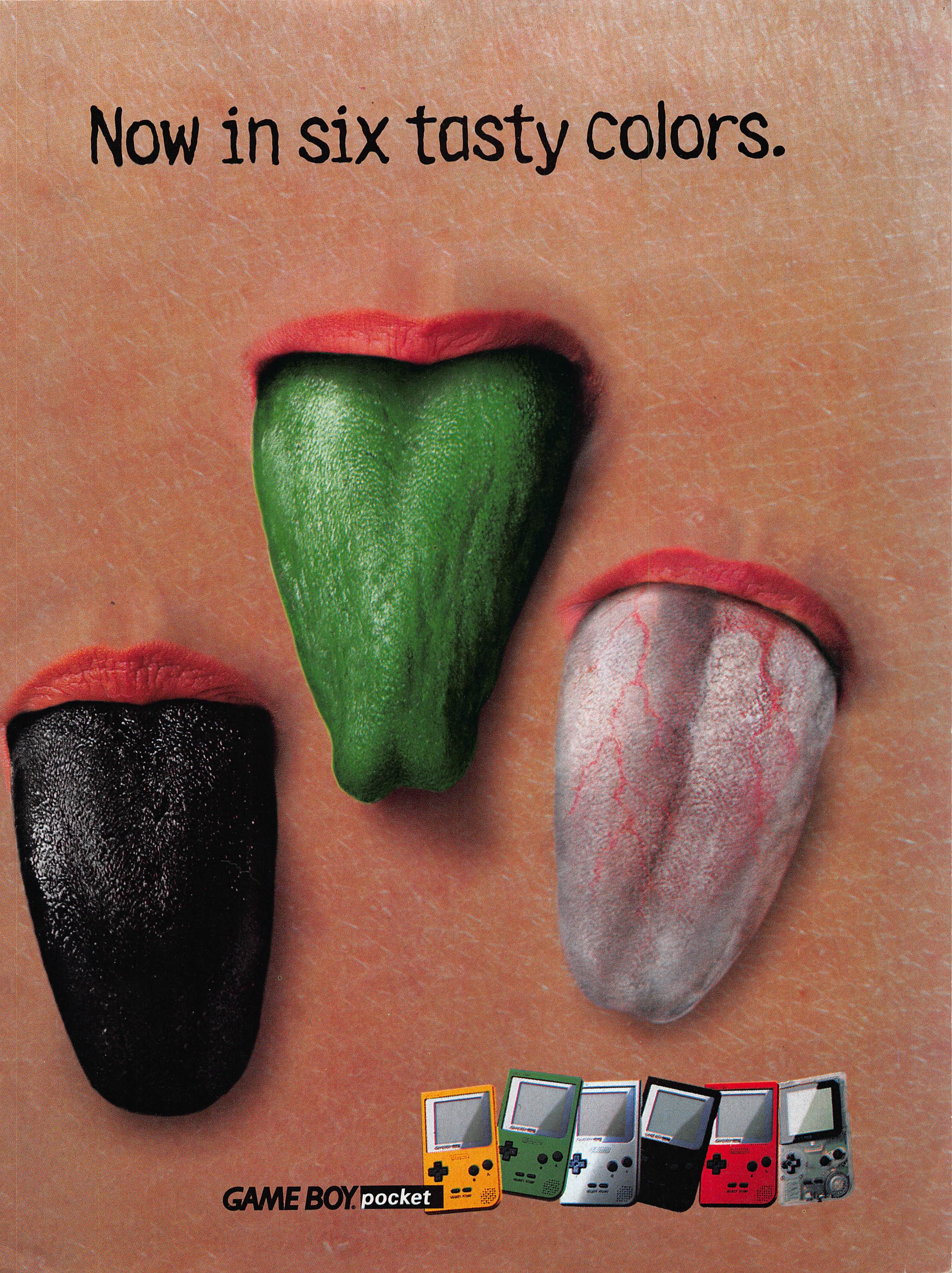
FIRST LOOK: MORTAL KOMBAT 4

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First I'd like to say what an honor it is to bring you the US exclusive on Konami's new *Castlevania* for the PlayStation. We've perhaps never chased down a game so vigorously as this, and I am forever in Konami US and Japan's debt for making it happen. I'd love to divulge the US title of said 2D masterpiece but cannot as the decision, though down to two possibles, has not been reached.

We've had a tough run of it this month, assembling the publication amongst the hammering thunder of construction as we expand the GameFan offices making room for our growing book division and MegaFan. So the arrival of *Castlevania* along with an issue of predominately good software was indeed welcome.

It's great to see the continuation of gaming legacies and from the looks of things, that evolution is not about to change. Not only are sequels to the games we've cherished for years, like *MegaMan*, *Castlevania*, *Street Fighter*, *Star Wars*, *Contra*, and *Final Fantasy*, abundant, but new games as well are gathering new and old users alike and spawning sequels at a record pace. Off the top of my head, *Resident Evil*, *Tomb Raider*, *Gex*, *Crash*, and *Nights* all have sequels in the works.

Not unlike the movie business, our industry is sequel driven. It makes sense. If something works and there's room for improvement and/or enhancement, while remaining true to the original formula, gamers, like movie-goers, will will be a part of it. It's when a sequel is made for money's sake that things tend to get a tad ugly. There's nothing worse than that sinking feeling when you've built up excitement for a product due to what it's based on and then unwrap it to find a worthless scrap of bad game theatre.

It all boils down to the corporate/marketing side allowing the creative side the freedom and trust necessary to produce gold. When the two mix the end result is usually tragic, but working in tandem, each staying on his/her side of the fence, things usually turn out better all the way around. Let's hope we enjoy the latter, as things progress throughout the reign of 32/64 bit gaming and into the gaming scene of tomorrow.

While we're on the subject of preserving the industry, which can be put in peril, I must express my concern regarding copying devices, which have once again reared their ugly heads. Touted as a means of never paying for a game again, this is simply not true. These devices are not only Illegal but the end result of their use is higher prices across the board and, should they become widespread, it's not unthinkable that certain companies may invest their development dollar elsewhere. I can't imagine pouring years of creative energy into a game only to see an incomplete version circulating, or people giving it away for free. If we want great games we have to show a little respect for the people who make them. If we all play nice together, the end result will benefit us all, and in a world as crazy as ours, video games are a big benefit.

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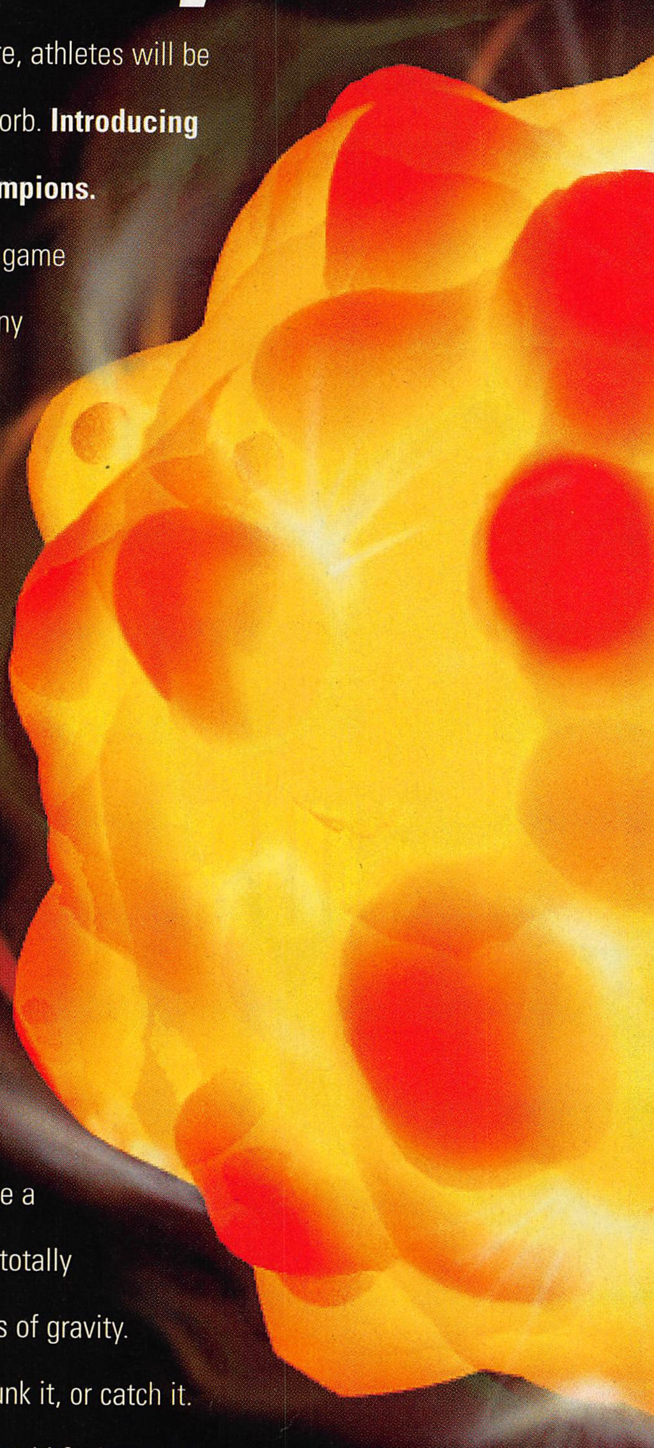


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Alucard illustrations by Ben Dunn. Color by Andy Walton.



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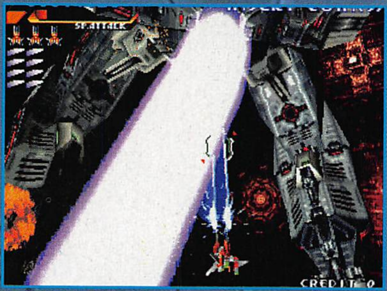
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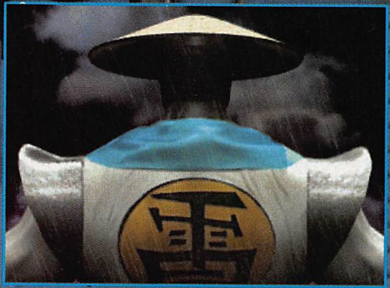
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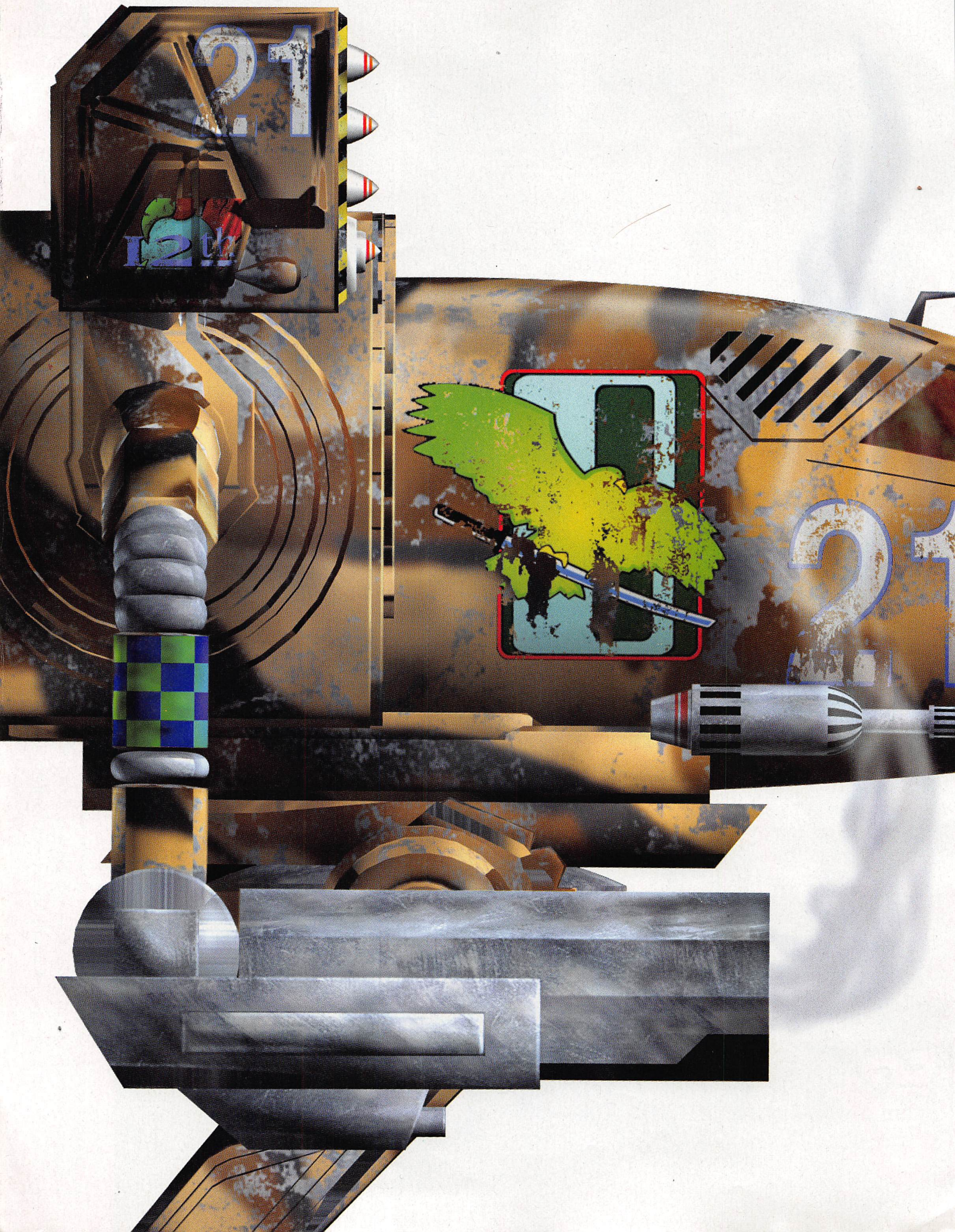


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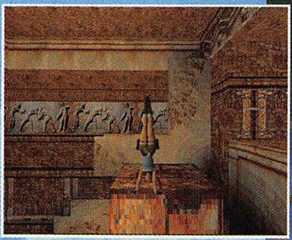
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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

READERS' TOP TEN

1. *Tomb Raider* - PS/Saturn
2. *Mario Kart 64* - N64
3. *Tekken 2* - PS
4. *Wave Race 64* - N64
5. *Suikoden* - PS
6. *Crash Bandicoot* - PS
7. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
8. *NiGHTS* - Saturn
9. *Persona* - PS
10. *Twisted Metal 2* - PS



READERS' MOST WANTED

1. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
2. *Resident Evil 2* - PS
3. *Tekken 3* - Arcade
4. *Soul Blade* - PS
5. *Tomb Raider 2* - PS
6. *Goldeneye* - N64
7. *SFA III* - Arcade
8. *MegaMan 8* - PS
9. *Zelda 64* - N64
10. *Crash Bandicoot 2* - PS



GF EDITORS' TOP TEN



1. *Castlevania X* - PS
2. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
3. *Shining the Holy Ark* - Saturn
4. *Wild Arms* - PS
5. *MegaMan 8* - PS
6. *RayStorm* - PS
7. *Philosoma* - PS
8. *Hermie Hopperhead* - PS
9. *Metal Slug* - Saturn
10. *Dynamite Headdy* - Genesis



1. *Rally Cross* - PS
2. *Black Dawn* - PS
3. *Turok* - N64
4. *CoolBoarders* - PS
5. *Jet Moto* - PS
6. *Doom 64* - N64
7. *SFA 2* - PS
8. *Parappa the Rapper* - PS
9. *SoulBlade* - PS
10. *Choro Q* - PS



1. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
2. *Castlevania X* - PS
3. *Virtual On* - Saturn
4. *SFA 2* - Saturn
5. *Suikoden* - PS
6. *Puzzle Fighter II* - Saturn
7. *Turok* - N64
8. *Mario Kart 64* - Nintendo 64
9. *RayStorm* - PS
10. *Soukyugurentai* - Saturn



1. *Street Fighter III* - Arcade
2. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
3. *Castlevania X* - PS
4. *Mario Kart 64* - N64
5. *Elevator Action Returns* - Saturn
6. *Assault Suit Leynos 2* - Saturn
7. *GTI Club* - Saturn
8. *Tetris Jr.* - Keychain
9. *Turok* - N64
10. *Target Earth* - Genesis



1. *Street Fighter 3* - Arcade
2. *Super Mario Kart 64* - N64
3. *Street Fighter Turbo*- SNES
4. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
5. *SoulBlade* - PS
6. *Ray Storm* - PS
7. *Shadows of the Empire* - N64
8. *Doom 64* - N64
9. *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* - N64
10. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - PS



1. *Vandal Hearts* - PS
2. *RayStorm* - PS
3. *Castlevania X* - PS
4. *Assault Suit Leynos 2* - Saturn
5. *Soukyugurentai* - Saturn
6. *Dark Rift* - N64
7. *Strider* - Genesis
8. *World Wide Soccer '97* - Saturn
9. *Wonderboy 3* - SMS
10. *Chaotix* - 32X

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest:

STANLEY LIU
PRESIDENT/CEO, *KRONOS DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT*

1. *Turok* - N64
2. *Mario Kart 64* - N64
3. *Twisted Metal 2* - PS
4. *SoulBlade* - PS
5. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
6. *Star Gladiator* - PS
7. *Tekken 3* - Arcade
8. *Tekken 2* - PS
9. *Suikoden* - PS
10. *Bushido Blade* - PS

WIN THE GAME SYSTEM OF YOUR CHOICE! ENTER TODAY!

All you have to do to enter the drawing is write down a list of your top 10 favorite games and the 10 games you want the most that aren't out yet, on a piece of paper or a postcard then send them to: GAMEFAN TOP TEN, 5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210 Agoura Hills, CA 91301

First Prize:
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Second Prize:
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Third Prize:
A FREE year of GameFan! The best magazine in the universe!

Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

Congratulations

to last month's winners:

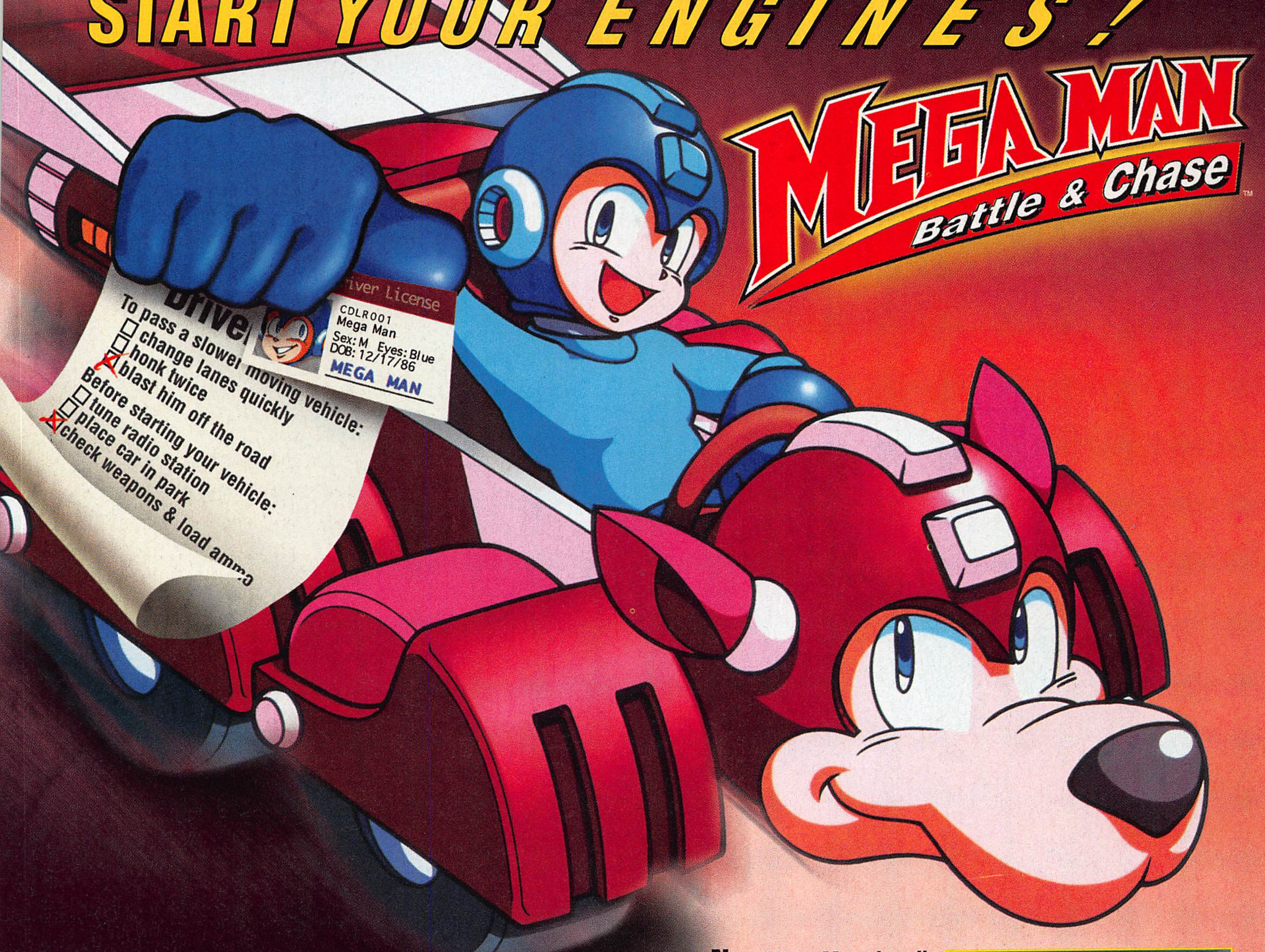
First Prize:
Stephen Hung, Industry, CA

Second Prize:
David Avila, Artesia, CA

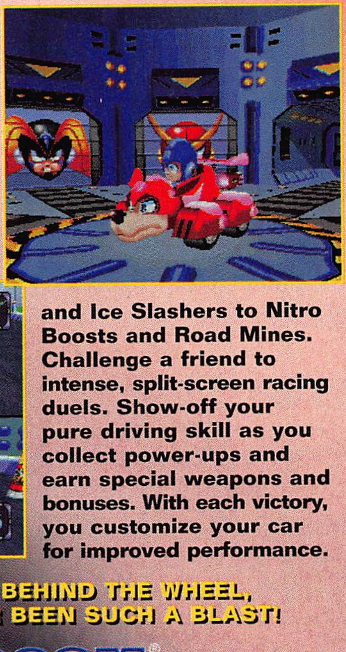
Third Prize:
Jordan William, Bradfield, TX

The Blue Bomber Takes to the Road...

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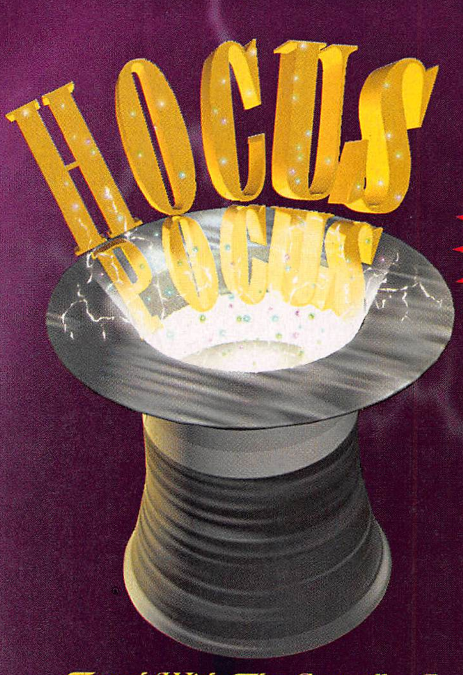
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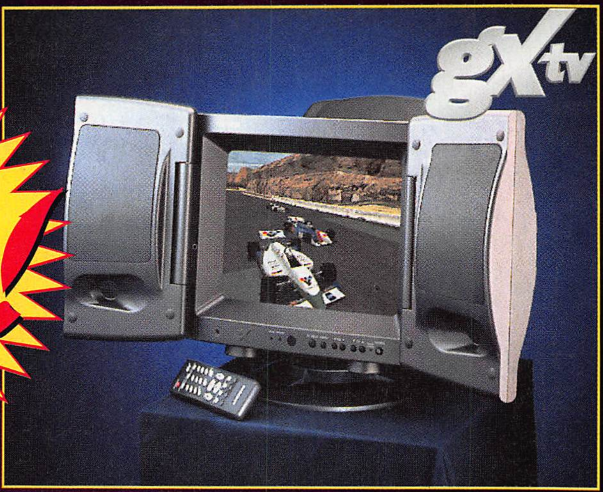
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Second Prize! Viewpoint game of your choice!

Third Prize! Free 1 year GameFan Subscription!!

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SEND YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS TO:
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CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS MONTH'S WINNERS!

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ADAM LINDSLEY, ILWACO, WASHINGTON

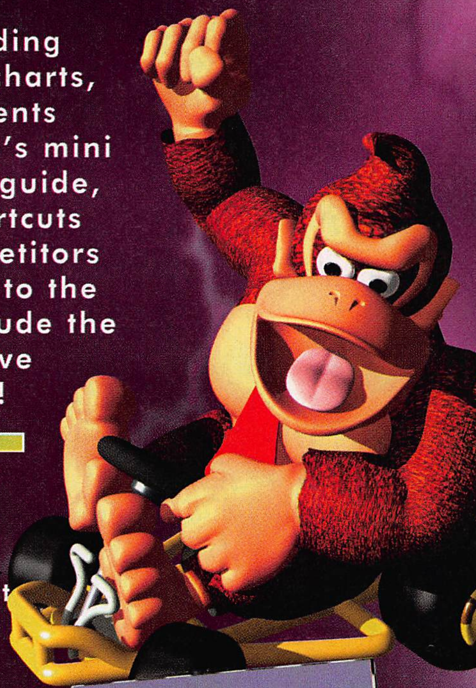
SECOND PRIZE WINNER:
YUNG-SUNG TU, NORTH CHARLESTON, S. CAROLINA

THIRD PRIZE WINNER:
JON STEFFEN, CHANDLER, ARIZONA

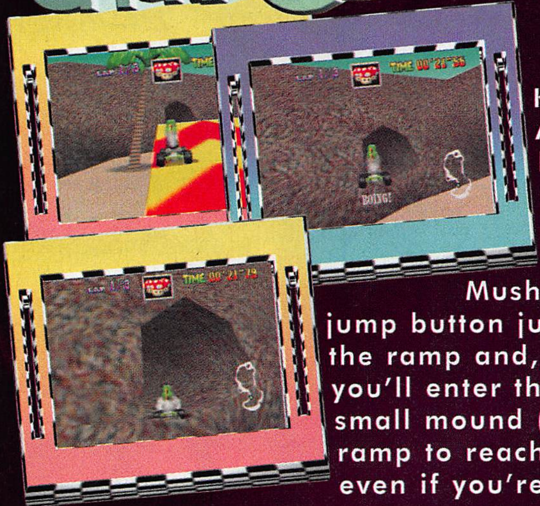
HIKARU & KNIGHTMARE present:

MARIO KART 64 MADNESS!!

With *MK64* currently riding high in the all-format charts, GameFan proudly presents Knightmare and Hikaru's mini *Mario Kart 64* strategy guide, complete with new shortcuts that'll make your competitors cringe! Sorry, but due to the lack of space we'll include the many other secrets we've found in the next Issue!

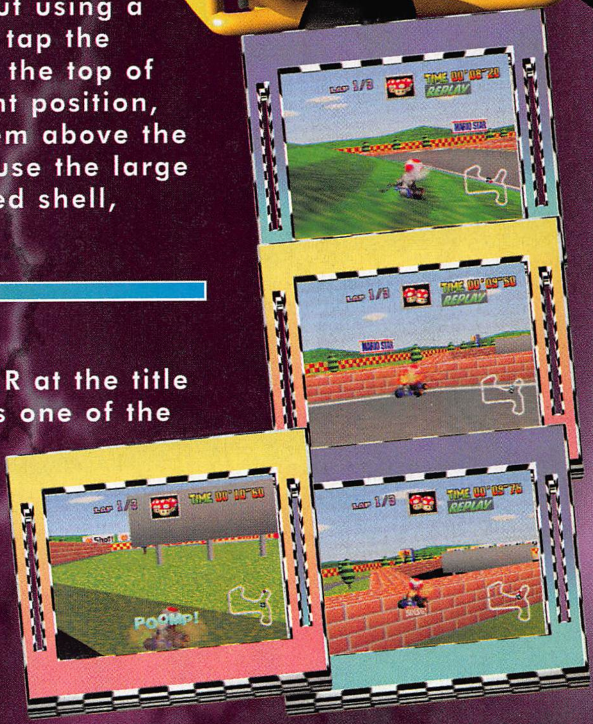


SHORTCUTS!



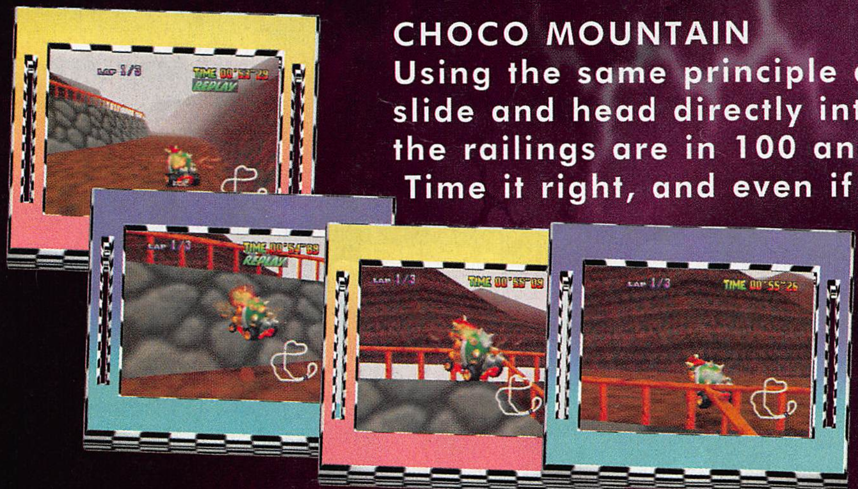
KOOPA TROOPA ISLAND

Although most people already know about the cave short cut on this track, did you know that it is possible to make the jump into the cave without using a Mushroom item? Simply tap the jump button just before you reach the top of the ramp and, if you're in the right position, you'll enter the cave. Also the item above the small mound (which you have to use the large ramp to reach) is ALWAYS a spiked shell, even if you're in first place.



MARIO RACEWAY

Considered to be the true racer's track (just tap L or R at the title screen for your fastest time), Mario Raceway contains one of the most spectacular shortcuts in the game. As you approach the mountain side corner leading down to the giant mushroom U-turn, drive slightly up onto the grass and then power down towards the outside lip of the corner using a Mushroom item (see sequence). Hop just as you reach the edge of the road and, if you've timed it right, you can clear the wall, cutting at least seven seconds of your lap time! You can land on both sides of the T-junction in the wall, although the right hand side saves more time.



CHOCO MOUNTAIN

Using the same principle as the Wario Stadium shortcuts, slide and head directly into the wall directly below where the railings are in 100 and 50cc mode (see sequence). Time it right, and even if the railings are there, you will still bounce up over the ledge and onto the higher portion of the track. The earlier you try this short-cut, the higher the wall, and the tougher it is to accomplish.

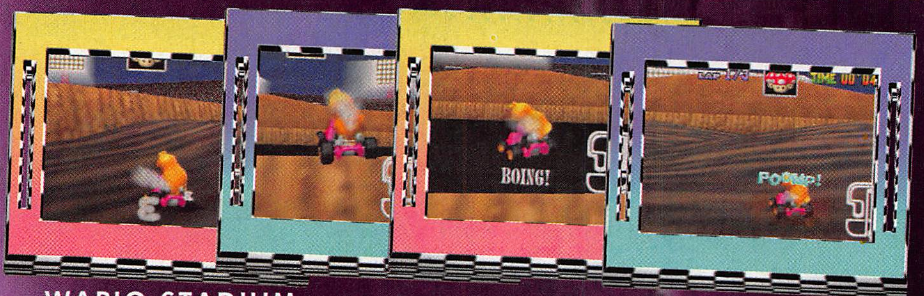
SHORTCUTS!





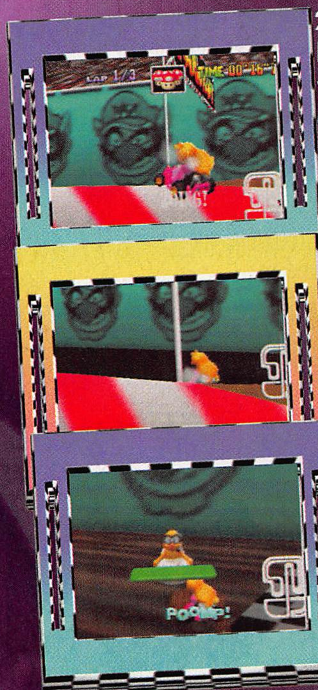
ROYAL RACEWAY

This shortcut ONLY works in 150CC mode, so it can't be used in Time Trial, I'm afraid. As you approach the second speed chevron on the large jump, turn left just as you hit the chevron and head out left off the jump towards the mountain. You can't make it all the way to the road, but if you can manage to land on the mountain side near the road (your character should go POOMP!), you'll fall into the water and be placed back on the track near where you fell in, instead of back up on the jump!



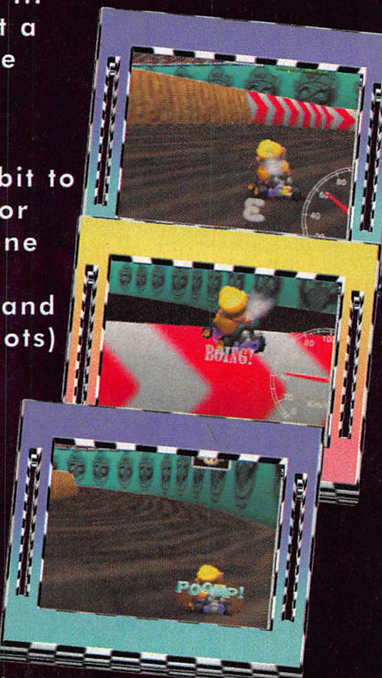
WARIO STADIUM

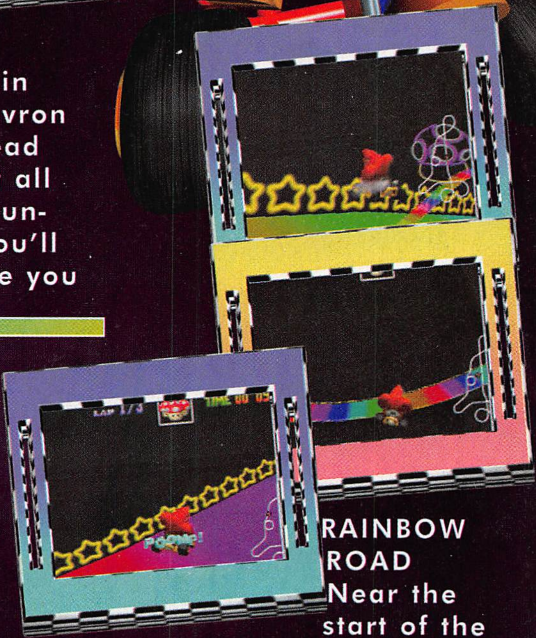
1. Just past the starting line, turn left on the first bump in the track and head directly into the wall at about 50-60 KMH. Just as you are about the hit the wall, press jump, and if you time it correctly the jump should propel you up over the wall, and into the mogul field on the other side! Remember, you must hit the wall dead on.



2. Now, turn around and head back towards the wall section you just came over, only further down behind the starting line (you can see it over the wall). By using the same technique as detailed above (sometimes it helps if you power slide into the wall as well) you can bounce back to the other side of the track and cross the starting line for a lap of time of under seven seconds!!! This piece of wall is much trickier to climb than the first, and it takes more practice to master. If you're having trouble, try using a heavier character (Kong, Wario or Bowser), or try using a Mushroom item to give you an extra bit of speed as you collide with the wall.

3. If short cut 2 is a bit to difficult (or cheap!) for your liking, try this one for size. As you approach this right hand corner (see screen shots) power slide into the boards on your left exactly where we show you, and once again tap jump just as you collide with the wall. Time it right and you'll clear the wall and land on the finishing stretch of the lap!





RAINBOW ROAD

Near the start of the track, as you approach the large, steep drop in the road, steer hard left and tap jump the moment the track starts to dip. If done correctly you will leave the track and fly into space, only to land back on another portion of track way below you ... cutting out a third of the lap!!!

Welcome to the urban jungle

Crime is out of control, and the cops have been replaced by bounty hunters like you. No courts, no trials... just instant retribution. Fire up one of eight heavily-armed vehicles and buzz through eight zones of digitized devastation. Use guns, grenades, rocket launchers, tire treads...whatever it takes. After all, you don't get paid for being nice.



EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

SEGA SATURN

1 OR 2 PLAYERS

SOUL EDGE/BLADE
SONY PLAYSTATION — ENDINGS, STAGE CYCLE, SOUL EDGE



In a previous Hocus Pocus, we mentioned that all of the characters in Soul Edge have changeable endings and to do so, you have to tap all of the buttons rapidly. Well, we now have the correct buttons to press for each and every ending. This should make things much easier on your hands... Sorry!

Taki - Press X.
Voldo - Press UP and DOWN on the control pad rapidly.
Mitsurugi - Use the control pad to move Mitsurugi left and right and forward. When you get close to Tanegashima, press SQUARE or TRIANGLE to deliver the strike.
Siegfreid - Press TRIANGLE.
Sophitia - Press RIGHT on the control pad.
Li Long - Press SQUARE or TRIANGLE repeatedly.
Rock - Press TRIANGLE.
Hwang - Press CIRCLE.
Cervantes - Press TRIANGLE.
Seung Mina - Press UP or DOWN repeatedly.

To get Soul Edge without beating the game with all of the characters, just leave the in-game time clock running (you'll see it in the OPTIONS screen in the upper-left hand side). When it reaches 20 hours, you will automatically receive Soul Edge as a playable character! Cheater!

To play on the Asia and Colosseum stage (which is only available in Edge Master Mode), simply set the ring size to 20 meters in the option screen. Now play a normal vs. game. It should first start off on Cervantes' stage, but play a few more times, and voila! The echo of the Colosseum awaits thee!

Is fighting on the same stage getting on your nerves? Memorized all of the tunes yet? Have you seen the birds on Seung Mina's stage more times than you care to remember? Ha! Then we've got the code for you! When selecting your character, press and HOLD, L1 and SELECT on the first controller. Continue holding until you've finished selecting your character and until the match starts. This should start a cycling process through the stages (Ack!).

FIGHTERS MEGAMIX
SEGA SATURN (IMPORT) — PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES

Having trouble getting all of the characters in this awesome brawler? If you happen to have a Pro Action replay for the Saturn, you're in luck! Don't forget to input the Master Code!

MASTER CODE: F600924 C305
B600280 0000

PLAYER 1
INFINITE LIFE: 1606556C 01FF

VANDAL HEARTS
SONY PLAYSTATION (IMPORT) — PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES

Yes! A debug code! Unfortunately, only for those with a Pro Action Replay. Hey, can I help it if the majority of my mail consists of Mortal Kombat (for the Genesis?), Twisted Metal 2 (and some Part 1), and Sonic the Hedgehog or Sonic and Knuckles for the Genesis? C'MON PEOPLE! GET WITH THE COOL CODES!!!

DEBUG CODE: 80142434 0000

ALL RIGHT PEOPLE! I WANT SOME UP-TO-DATE CODES! FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, THERE'S A GXTV UP FOR GRABS! IF YOU GUYS DON'T STOP SENDING ME THESE ANCIENT CODES, THEN I'M GONNA HAVE TO AWARD LOLLIPOPS AS FIRST PRIZE! - WAKA & CHIEF HAMBLETON



KONAMI
DESTINY
is in your hands.
But time
is running
out.
Real Time Audio Interaction
You'll encounter realistically rendered aliens, scientists, marines, warbots, mutants, hybrids, and computers.
Cop an Attitude
When dealing with aliens,you can be nasty or you can be nice. It's your funeral.
20 Minutes of Rendered Cinemas
Highly detailed mini-movies explain your mission, show flashbacks or what's happening on other levels.
4-D Real Time Gameplay
Move wherever you want, whenever you want. Get advice, ask questions. Or just walk away.
Konami® presents Broken Helix™. Brought to you in incredible Real Time 4-D. Where there's no right way - or wrong way to accomplish your mission. You've got to ask questions first and shoot later. Or you just might end up whacking the only guy with the information you need to get out alive. But don't take *too* long, or you'll end up becoming alien luncheon meat. Broken Helix stars Bruce Campbell as Jake Burton, the marine commando explosives expert assigned to find out why scientists are threatening to blow up Area 51, (yes, *that* Area 51) and to stop the mutated aliens from escaping. Either by curing them, or by destroying them. Or you might choose another scenario, that has you turn into an alien-human hybrid. Or perhaps you feel like being an evil scientist this time around. The choice-and the outcome, is totally up to you. So enter the world of Broken Helix, where the only sure thing is that there are no sure things.
BROKEN HELIX™
www.konami.com
RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PlayStation
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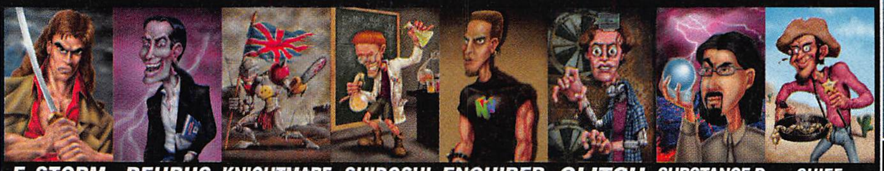

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YOU CAN PLAY THEM IN YOUR DARK, DINGY, SMELLY ROOM.
GRAB YOUR JUSTIFIER AND START SHOOTING- LETHAL ENFORCERS I & II™ AND CRYPT KILLER™ ARE READY FOR YOUR HOME MACHINE.
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VIEWPOINT

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality



E. STORM · REUBUS · KNIGHTMARE · SHIDOSHI · ENQUIRER · GLITCH · SUBSTANCE D · CHIEF HAMBLETON



TAIL OF THE SUN - PS GAME OF THE MONTH!



BLAST CORPS
NINTENDO 64
NINTENDO
ACTION/ADVENTURE

It's not the execution, but concept behind *Blast Corps* that has me a bit weary. I'm just not sure how much fun it is guiding vehicles from point A to point B, crushing everything in your path and occasionally butt-bouncing buildings as a huge *Power Ranger*-like dude. Since NOA only gave us a day with the final, it's hard to say just how engulfing *BC* is over the long haul. But being that this is RARE, whom I'll always hold in high regard due to *Battletoads*, I must give them the benefit of the doubt and swing my score a little higher than I'm prone to. Knightmare played it the longest and he's in love. (Then again, he's a madman!)

G 7 · C 7 · P 8 · M 7 · O 9 — **80**

In an age where originality is a Rare thing indeed, *Blast Corps* comes as a breath of fresh air. It has its problems (namely some extremely dodgy control on some of the vehicles) but its unique premise, impressive aesthetics and strong game design shine through. It's not going to be everyone's cup of tea, but for the more adventurous N64 owner, *Blast Corps* is going to provide weeks of involving gameplay. It certainly adds some much needed diversity to the N64's, er, 'library' of games.

G 8 · C 7 · P 9 · M 8 · O 10 — **90**

Apart from *Mario*, *Blast Corps* is perhaps the most original use of N64 3D I've yet seen. The concept of maneuvering all forms of machinery through countless environments, your sole mission to clear the way for a carrier truck, is cool and refreshing. But the game isn't just about blasting through obstacles; puzzle-type missions require meticulous precision, careful judgement, and efficient planning. The graphics are great (more neato N64 fx at 30 fps), and the soundtrack is one of the best so far on the system. The control, sadly, is a little awkward.

G 8 · C 7 · P 8 · M 8 · O 9 — **83**



SENTIENT
PLAYSTATION
PSYGNOSIS
RPG

Psygnosis' *Sentient* takes a cool concept (the ability to compose unique sentences), and places it within the context of a science fiction adventure/RPG. The story is involving, and gets more so as the game progresses. There is a problem however in the decided lack of variety in the environments. And be warned, there isn't a lot of action in this game. Still, if you're up for a sci-fi flavored adventure/RPG, give *Sentient* a try. It's certainly a unique experience.

G 7 · C 8 · P 8 · M na · O 9 — **81**

Psygnosis has taken a real risk with *Sentient*, and in doing so provided a tantalizing glimpse at the possible future of RPGs. Featuring perhaps the most advanced character interaction system in the history of videogames, realistic behavioral AI and multiple plot lines, *Sentient* is an innovative first-person adventure that dares to fly in the face of convention and aim itself squarely at an intelligent audience (always a danger in this industry). It's pretty plain looking, and pretty slow moving, but if the idea of a game that makes you think instead of shoot sounds appealing, be sure to check it out.

G 7 · C 7 · P 9 · M na · O 10 — **88**

What a strange, strange game. The bizarre speech system Psygnosis has implemented is excellent. With it you can form semi-complex phrases—actually *talk* to characters—making it the most original feature in any adventure game I've seen. The sci-fi settings and varied storylines are gripping and atmospheric, though the environments could stand a dose of variety. Although it is a good quest, and I'm happy to be playing something this revolutionary, a sequel might perfect the concept.

G 7 · C 7 · P 7 · M na · O 10 — **82**



MECHWARRIOR 2
PLAYSTATION
ACTIVISION
MECH

As mech sims go, and they don't go far with me (with the exception of GameArts' *Gun Griffon*, the king of all mech games) *MW2* is better than I anticipated. The control is user friendly and the missions are clear-cut & enjoyable without being overly complex. CG's cool too. The music, as well, is quite good but not an exact fit to the action. The problem lies in the slightly barren landscapes and the lack of a 2nd camera behind your character. Overall, I'm sure *MW* fans will be quite pleased.

G 7 · C 8 · P 7 · M 8 · O 7 — **78**

In porting *MW2* over to the PS, Activision has re-jigged the *MW2* formula to cater to the console market. However, the new balance isn't entirely successful. *MW2* neither feels like a sim or a shoot-'em-up. It's still a cool game, but PS owners weaned on fast-paced 3D shooters may find the pace a tad sedate for their liking, while hardcore sim fanatics won't find enough depth to get their teeth into. Still, if your taste sits somewhere in between, you're going to love it. The best of its kind on the PS.

G 8 · C 8 · P 7 · M 9 · O 7 — **84**

The smash PC title makes its way to the PlayStation, albeit in a simplified form. Only natural, considering you're going from a keyboard to a pad. Some of the strategy of the PC version has been excised, which is sort of the point of the PS translation. The emphasis here is on action. Still, I can't shake the feeling that a title like this is best left on the PC, where you can play a networked game.

G 7 · C 7 · P 7 · M 8 · O 8 — **77**



RALLY CROSS
PLAYSTATION
SONY
RACING

And I thought *VMX* had a learning curve. Yipes! You gotta spend some quality time tweaking your equilibrium to stay on course in *Rally Cross*. Once you do, however (and after you see the visuals, you will), prepare yourself for one fine piece of software. The physics are unbelievable, the graphics are seeping with goodness, and there's plenty of depth. Additionally, multiple cameras are on board along with some impressive lighting, as only the PS can deliver.

G 9 · C 7 · P 8 · M 7 · O 7 — **85**

There are a lot of good racing titles on PS, so any new one has to be pretty good to pass muster. Not only is Sony's *Rally Cross* a great racer, it also fills a niche in the PS' library. As for the graphics, the game's engine is robust and smooth, with pop-up very well hidden. The trackside detail is great, as are the ambient sound effects. The control will feel sluggish at first and you'll be turning over a lot, though with practice, both these can be licked. Most impressive is the fact there are six (including backwards) variations of each track, along with all sorts of short cuts to keep you coming back for more. The music's not quite my cup of tea, though. I can do without the jammin' guitar licks.

G 8 · C 7 · P 8 · M 6 · O 7 — **87**

We've had a number of off-road rally type games come through the offices lately, but nothing else comes even close to the splendor that is *Rally Cross*. Although it's quite tough to master the control (and beating Suicide Mode is incredibly hard), it's only because it's a bit more complex than the dime-a-dozen *Ridge* or *Daytona* racing games. Plus you've got amazing graphics, sound effects that are absolutely second to none, and opponents that just want to run you off the track (literally). It all adds up to the most four-wheelin' fun you can have in your own living room. *Rally Cross* is right up there with *Jet Moto*!

G 10 · C 9 · P 9 · M 9 · O 9 — **94**



VANDAL HEARTS
PLAYSTATION
KONAMI
STRATEGY

Vandal Hearts brings new life to an otherwise lifeless category (*Tactics Ogre & Arc the Lad 1 & 2* remain exclusive to Japan) by 1st of all, showing up (quickly too!), and, by not only getting everything right, but by doing it better in every facet of game design. Camping out for long strategic battles can grow tiresome, but in VH's case this never happens. These are among the fiercest and most engaging I've seen.

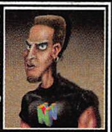
G 8 · C 8 · P 9 · M 9 · O 9 — **88**

There is a huge hole in the American market for a decent strategy/RPG and *Vandal Hearts* more than fills the gap. The battles are like some cool table-top war game come to life, with colorful, detailed sprites and 3D battlefields. Each new fight requires a different strategy for success, and no two battles are alike. Inventive, challenging, and deeply tactical, *Vandal Hearts* should be at the top of every strategy fan's shopping list.

G 8 · C 9 · P 9 · M 9 · O 8 — **90**

I love this game. I've played almost every strategy RPG known to man, and *Vandal Hearts* is the best ever. Every feature, and I mean options, graphics, gameplay—*everything* I need—has finally been stuffed into one game. The battles are too cool, offering sights and sounds that never get old, nasty 3D playfields, and the best strategy sessions ever. Every time I stop playing, I begin to miss the game. Buy *Vandal Hearts*... over 25 hours of pure strategic bliss awaits.

G 8 · C 9 · P 10 · M 9 · O 9 — **93**



This is one of those bizarre games that grows on you the more you play it. Even though it may not look as amazing as *Crash* or *Rage Racer*, *Tail of the Sun* features weeks of unique, surreal gameplay that will keep you both engrossed and amused. Artdink are to be commended on creating such an original title, and I highly recommend it to any and all gamers looking for something a little (actually, make that a lot) different.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 10 O 10 **88**



Artdink is a fine purveyor of quality (yet 'off the wall') releases and this is a wild, pure, simple and highly addictive addition to any PlayStation fan's collection. One huge polygon world. A whole tribe of mutated cavepeople. Mammoths. Falling asleep under the stars. You wander. You progress. You find fire and religion. And then you fall into the ocean and drown. This'll keep you utterly relaxed for hours on end in a supremely atmospheric romp. Sweet and brilliant. And next is *Parappa the Rapper...*

G 7 C 9 P 9 M 10 O 10 **93**



Artdink harnesses enough creative energy to light the moon. *Tail of the Sun* is an adventure like no other. You begin as a lowly, dumb, weak caveman and through the process of careful livin' will not only build a tower to the sun but birth an entire people of your own design! The game is full of unexpected pleasure as you traverse the outer regions. The landscape is littered with color and gorgeous lighting and, although simple, the graphics are excellent. An altogether engulfing PS experience.

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 10 O 10 **91**



TAIL OF THE SUN
PLAYSTATION
ARTDINK
LIFE



Well, I've got to say, I was hoping for a bit more from this game, but, all things considered, *VMX Racing* is still far and away the best motocross game to date. I don't mind the touchy control so much—it's necessary to negotiate the tighter turns. The graphics are quite well done, the tracks diverse, the sound effects adequate, and the music is pretty good, but there's something strange about bouncing off of invisible walls. Once you get the control down enough to avoid the walls in the first place, it's quite good fun.

G 9 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 8 **83**



Well, there's no doubt about it. *VMX Racing* is the best motocross game currently available for the PS. It's also virtually the only motocross game available, so, no prizes there. I'm not a huge motocross fan, and found the game extremely difficult to control, but I've seen E. Storm tearing up the tracks like some mad Johnny O, so I guess it's possible to get it down. Besides, what other options do motocross fans have?

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 7 **79**

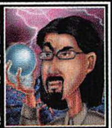


Now that I've got *VMX* thoroughly dialed, I'm lovin' it! The control is touchy, but choose the right bike for your particular style and things calm down quite a bit. The motos are highly competitive and require near perfection to win, but hey, so does the real thing. The visuals are lush, complete with polygon rooster tails, an excellent representation of the sport, the frame rate is high and the music rocks. If you're into fast precision racing, and are highly coordinated, *VMX* is for you!

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 8 **88**



VMX RACING
PLAYSTATION
PLAYMATES
RACING



I shall use the ancient caveman tongue to describe the graphics in this game: Ugh. This game looks bad. The pop-up is unreasonable and the sprites blocky as can be. Still, I guess it's just like the arcade, and if that's what you want, here it is. I will admit, however, that the game is fast-paced and there is always lots of stuff to shoot (with a light gun, of course—do not play with pad). If you didn't get enough of the arcade version, knock yourself out. I won't.

G 5 C na P 6 M 6 O 6 **65**



You know what? I kinda liked *Crypt Killer* in the arcade. Even though it couldn't hold a candle to *Virtua Cop 2* or *Time Crisis*, the pump action shotguns were cool, and blowing away hordes of chunky 2D scaling monsters was real satisfying. But at home, with a light gun and a less-than-perfect conversion, it just plain sucks dome. PS gun fans would do well to stick with *Die Hard Trilogy*, or better yet, wait for *Time Crisis*.

G 4 C na P 5 M 6 O 2 **50**



Crypt Killer really isn't so bad. The action is always intense, the levels are long, and I like the freaky undead enemies. The camera roves through the levels effectively, aided by a decent frame rate and limited pop-up. Oh sure, it's a pixel-fest when the sprite-based enemies jump at your face, but I can deal with it (I kinda like the chunky look). *CK*'s a generation behind the power polygon gun-games of today, but it still plays moderately well.

G 6 C na P 6 M 8 O 7 **65**



CRYPT KILLER
PLAYSTATION
KONAMI
SHOOTING



Okay, think about it. One of the biggest movies ever, packed with action, popular actors, and incredible special effects, is coming home to the 32-bit systems. What would you expect? Certainly not this. The possibilities are virtually endless, but this, uh, this... Poor control, lack of cohesive direction, forgettable sounds, absolutely no variety in level design, and that same damn ship hovering overhead the entire game. Hmmm... No thanks.

G 6 C 6 P 4 M 4 O 6 **48**



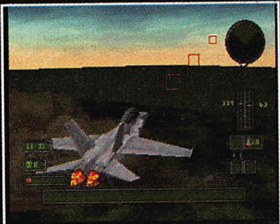
Oh, dear. I can appreciate that Fox has tried to do something a little different with this movie license, but it really hasn't worked. Flying around blasting aliens is fun for a while, but the game engine is so weak and the action so repetitive that it all turns sour sooner than you'd like. Plus, you just can't shake the feeling that this is some bad bonus stage in some other, better game. Which it isn't.

G 6 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 7 **56**



ID4... BIG movie. Awesome effects! Shallow story. Cheesy one liners... Awesome effects! Made TRILLIONS! This game should have been a straight shooter with inspired effects (like the movie, which made trillions) and an engine like *Ray Storm*'s. But there's really no point going here unless you have the urge to be "just like Wil." *ID4*'s not a hard core shooter nor a healthy flight sim. This one simply falls short.

G 5 C 6 P 6 M 6 O 6 **50**



ID4
PLAYSTATION
FOX INTERACTIVE
SHOOTING



Can you imagine driving around a pop-up laden off-road track in a Jeep? OK, now imagine it with a Hummer, a Land Rover, and a Chevy truck, and you should have a pretty good idea what *Test Drive: Off Road* is all about. The two player mode is atrocious, simply because you can't see where on earth you're going. While there is a selection of twelve tracks to race through and a "cool" soundtrack by Gravity Kills, you will most likely not enjoy this tedious off road romp.

G 5 C 5 P 5 M 6 O 6 **51**



In order to play a driving game you need to be able to do two things: steer and see the track. In *TDOR* you can do neither. I suppose the 'real' vehicles may be an attraction for some, but personally, I would rather crazy-glue my face to an 18-wheeler whilst listening to Kenny G than play this game. That is all.

G 5 C 5 P 4 M 7 O 3 **36**



If Arnold saw this game, I'm convinced he'd sell the Hummer. *TDOR* has an assortment of "actual" vehicles which may attract those unfinanceable few who simply must pilot a new 4x4, but sadly, the game falls apart due to some truly heinous pop-up which actually impedes your progress. In the wake of *Thunder Truck Rally*, *VMX Racing*, and *Rally Cross*, *TDOR*'s way at the back of the pack.

G 4 C 6 P 5 M 5 O 4 **45**



TEST DRIVE OFF ROAD
PLAYSTATION
ACCOLADE
RACING



Taito rules. They masterminded my favorite Saturn 2D shooter (and bargain bin champion!) *Darius Gaiden*, and now they dominate the PS with *Ray Storm*. The graphics are amazing! Blazing-fast polygonal backgrounds, beautiful effects, and crisp details run rampant through 7 intense levels. The gameplay is just as solid: screen-melting boss encounters, powerful weapons, dozens of targets, 2-player simul., and *no slowdown*. The glory of Zuntata secures the victory. *Ray Storm* is the official god of PS shooters.

G 10 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 8 **90**



The other night while I was playing *Axelay*, God manifested in my living room and asked me if I wanted to try a new PS shooter he had been working on. "Sure," I replied, "Why not?" What I then experienced was seven levels of mind-numbing 3D graphics, cool, ultra-destructive weapons, lightning-paced two player gameplay, Zuntata tunes and an 'enhanced' mode that actually improves on the coin-op. "What should I call it?" God asked. "*Lazer Dazer*?" I ventured. "Actually, I was thinking of *Ray Storm*." "Yeah! *Ray Storm*!" And thus, a new king of PS overhead shooters was crowned...

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 7 **91**



As shooters go on the PS *Philosoma* has been far and away my favorite... until now. *Ray Storm* blew in to GF unexpectedly and took us all by storm. Taito has truly outdone themselves with this burning hot shooter. The engine is extremely fluid with hyper-detailed poly bg's, the music is ZTT's best since *Darius* and the special effects and animation are second to none. Pile on 2-plyr. mode and massive bosses that pulse with life and you've got one helluva ride! Yeehaaw!

G 9.5 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 8 **90**



RAYSTORM
PLAYSTATION
TAITO
SHOOTING



LUNACY
SATURN
ATLUS
FMV



I'll come right out with it... FMV adventures, in my opinion, are highly suspect. Because no matter how great they may be, once it's done... it's done. Replayability factor zero. Of course, the arthritic or like, un-coordinated people probably revel in the splendor of the interactive movie, so to them I highly recommend *Lunacy*. It's a great adventure as these things go. Dark, moody, and quite enthralling. It's a well-produced 2-disc set indeed. Personally, I'd rather just watch a good movie...like *Howard the Duck*.

G 7 C na P 7 M 8 O 8 **75**



Play *Lunacy* all alone, in a dark room, with plenty of time to kill. It's not exactly scary, but it'll make you think. The game's pace, atmosphere, music, and graphics all convey a sensation of relaxed tension; it's as if your world is collapsing, but you might as well explore it. Riiiight. Well, the FMV is very clean, and it shifts from scene to scene almost seamlessly (at first glance *Lunacy* looks like an amazing corridor game, it's so fluid). This is a classy, suspenseful, interactive CG movie-well worth your money.

G 8 C na P 8 M 9 O 9 **82**



I'm a little surprised to see *Lunacy* receive an English translation, as games like this generally stay in Japan. *Lunacy* has great atmosphere and a wonderful musical score. Thankfully, the FMV is pretty clean for Saturn, which is a good thing because the entire game is FMV. As would be expected, the voice acting is a bit hokey at times, though this may only add to your enjoyment of the game. If you liked Warp's *D*, *Lunacy* should delight, though the game doesn't really pick up until disc 2.

G 8 C na P 8 M 9 O 8 **86**



NORSE BY NORSEWEST
SATURN
INTERPLAY
ACTION/PUZZLE



From the glory days of 16-bit comes that era's most engaging puzzle actioner all dressed up with sharp detail and deep color. The single biggest, and my favorite new feature, is the hilarious voice over which is written and performed incredibly well. This adds a new dimension to an already thoroughly entertaining quest. The broken fool on my right (brain donor) would opt for flat characters while I find the modeled ones immensely better. The soundtrack is excellent as well.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 **78**



This one's easy: Let's say you're like me, and you loved the 16-bit original. Now a 32-bit sequel comes along, and your expectations are high. Well, cool puzzles abound in *NBN*, complimented by fantastic music (as in *really* good) and excellent voice-overs for every character. The graphics, unfortunately, are pretty weak—there's just not enough parallax, special fx, or animation. And why are the Vikings lame clay-models now, instead of hand-drawn like the original? Oh well, it's still more of what I wanted, and I'm just happy it's here!

G 6 C 8 P 9 M 10 O 9 **81**



Attention old school *Lost Vikings* fans. Your sequel has arrived, in a somewhat shiny 32-bit wrapper. By that, I mean to say that the graphics are certainly passable, just not what they could be. Still, it's good to see a game like this updated. There are even a couple of new characters to control. Outside of that though, there's not too much here beyond the 16-bit version. However, it still seems as clever as the first and is a fun game, especially with two players. Good tunes as well.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 8 O 9 **83**



DIE HARD ARCADE
SATURN
SEGA
SCROLLING FIGHTER



Having never played the coin-op, I was excited about *DHA*'s arrival. After playing it however, I'm less than thrilled. The moves, a vast array of *VF*-like maneuvers, are great, but the game design which takes you from room to room where you simply clear the screen of enemies is rather lame. I'll wait for Core's 3D *Streets of Rage*-like game and pass on *DHA*. It's a 40-minute-long arcade port I can live without. A nice production overall, but there's just not enough meat on its bones.

G 7 C 7 P 9 M 7 O 8 **70**



AM1 has taken the scrolling beat-'em-up genre and dragged it kicking and screaming into the age of 32-bit. *DHA* features detailed polygon characters, cool 3D backdrops, dozens of weapons, *VF*-style special moves and an interactive camera system that intelligently frames the action. It's like *Final Fight* meets *Virtua Fighter* with guns! The journey may be a bit short for my liking, but there's no denying that it's tremendous fun while it lasts.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 9 **89**



Stop pumping quarters into the coin-op and enjoy a perfect arcade translation. In every way, down to the last polygon, *Die Hard Arcade* is exact on the Saturn. Gotta love cool *VF* gameplay (plenty o' PPK action) in a *Final Fight*-style beat-'em-up setting. Even the control is perfect, with countless combos and devastating grabs. The level construction is bland, but with many environmental hazards (like mad fire trucks and plummeting elevators) as well as a half-a-dozen weapons, there's plenty of substance. Big problem: *DHA* is *very* short. Heck of a ride though.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 9 **84**



SCUD
SATURN
SEGASOFT
ACTION/SHOOTING



Scud's greatest asset is its storyline and CG accompaniment. Dive into the game however, and you find a mixed bag of side-scrolling goodness, and not-so-goodness. Parallax—check. Beautifully rendered scenery—check. Gameplay... well, hold on a minute. Sure, the functionality of the multi peripheral system is cool, but as a stand-alone side-scroller, the game is rather repetitive. It seems *Scud* was designed around the gun + controller premise, so it's a better 2 plyr. game than 1plyr. Still, a polished overall offering with a hot premise and graphics to burn. It's a cool SS exclusive.

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 9 **79**



Scud is a cool character, and the dark and surreal world portrayed in his comic book is perfectly captured by the game's twisted visuals. However, the actual game that accompanies it isn't so great. It's not so much the concept that's gone wrong as the implementation. I love gun games AND 2D platform/shooters, and the idea of combining the two appeals to me enormously. But this is not the game to do it. The mechanics in the 2D sections are way too loose (not enough room to maneuver), while the gun sections just aren't satisfying enough. Plus, Scud's gun sounds like someone's making popcorn!! Maybe *Scud 2* will get it right.

G 8 C 7 P 6 M 8 O 8 **80**



I'll start by saying how nice it is to see another 2D Saturn game. When all is said and done, that's where the SS truly excels. Scud, a unique merging of intense side scrolling action and gun shooting, I found to be a refreshing break from the norm. Although a tad lackluster in the play mechanics dept., the visuals are rich and well rendered, the storyline and CG therein, tasty, and Scud himself, extremely likeable to the point of sequel-worthy. The tunes are a bit harsh but for the most part they're OK, too.

G 8.5 C 8 P 6 M 7 O 9 **80**



CONTRA: LOW
SATURN
KONAMI
ACTION



I was hoping (no, praying) that Appaloosa would take out those @#&*% reappearing enemy sprites, but sadly, they crash this party, too. On a positive note, the 3D glasses work insanely well on this version and the 3D engine is fully intact. The platforming portions are still broken, but otherwise *Contra: Legacy Of War* is a solid action game for the gamer who demands a game so challenging he'll grow a beard to the floor beating it on hard. A 2D *Contra* is now absolutely mandatory!! *Dracula X* is heaven !!!

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 7 **78**



While I have every faith in Konami (*Castlevania X* is amazing), you can't help but wonder why they'd farm out one of their most successful franchises ever to the company that made *Three Dirty Dwarves*. The good news is that this is a great conversion of the PS version. The bad news is that the PS version was disappointing. It may have cool 3D graphics, and awesome music, but the control system sucks beyond belief (like *Smash TV* on the Genesis) and the game is cheaper than K-Mart. This is not the *Contra* I know and love. *Legacy of War*? *Legacy Of Poor*, more like.

G 8 C 3 P 5 M 9 O 6 **75**



The horror, the horror. This is not *Contra*. Why, oh, why make *Contra 3-D*? It may work for some characters (like Mario), but something like this needs to be 2D. Especially if the 3D is not exceptional, as is the case here. It is a little faster, perhaps, than the PS version, though still sloppy looking and feeling. This just doesn't give me that *Contra* sensation I was hoping and looking for. Next time Konami, please, do the game yourselves.

G 7 C 6 P 6 M 7 O 6 **67**



KING OF FIGHTERS '96
SATURN
SNK
FIGHTING



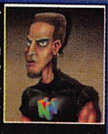
My love for *Samurai Shodown* aside, I think *King of Fighters* is SNK's best fighting game series. With the newest in this yearly-updated series, *KOF '96*, SNK now holds the top four slots on my list of favorite fighters. The Saturn version replicates the arcade beautifully, with the same amazing character graphics, highly animated backgrounds, and excellent control. The only real differences are the newly-added Survivor Mode, slightly muffled voices, and remixed soundtrack (with the coolest-of-cool Psycho Soldier theme). I just pray that when *KOF '97* comes along, it'll still be 2D.

G 10 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 7 **93**



Just as sure as night turns to day you can count on SNK to never stop making fighting games. I happen to like the *KOF* series, and see it as one of the few legitimate alternatives to Capcom's 2D beat-'em-ups. *KOF '96* sees a brace of new characters make their debut (new fighters accompanied by some familiar faces from other SNK fighters) along with new techniques and graphics. The Saturn version is a 99%-accurate conversion that perfectly recreates all the 2D splendor of the Neo•Geo slug fest, and fans of the series are going to love it. I did.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 4 **91**

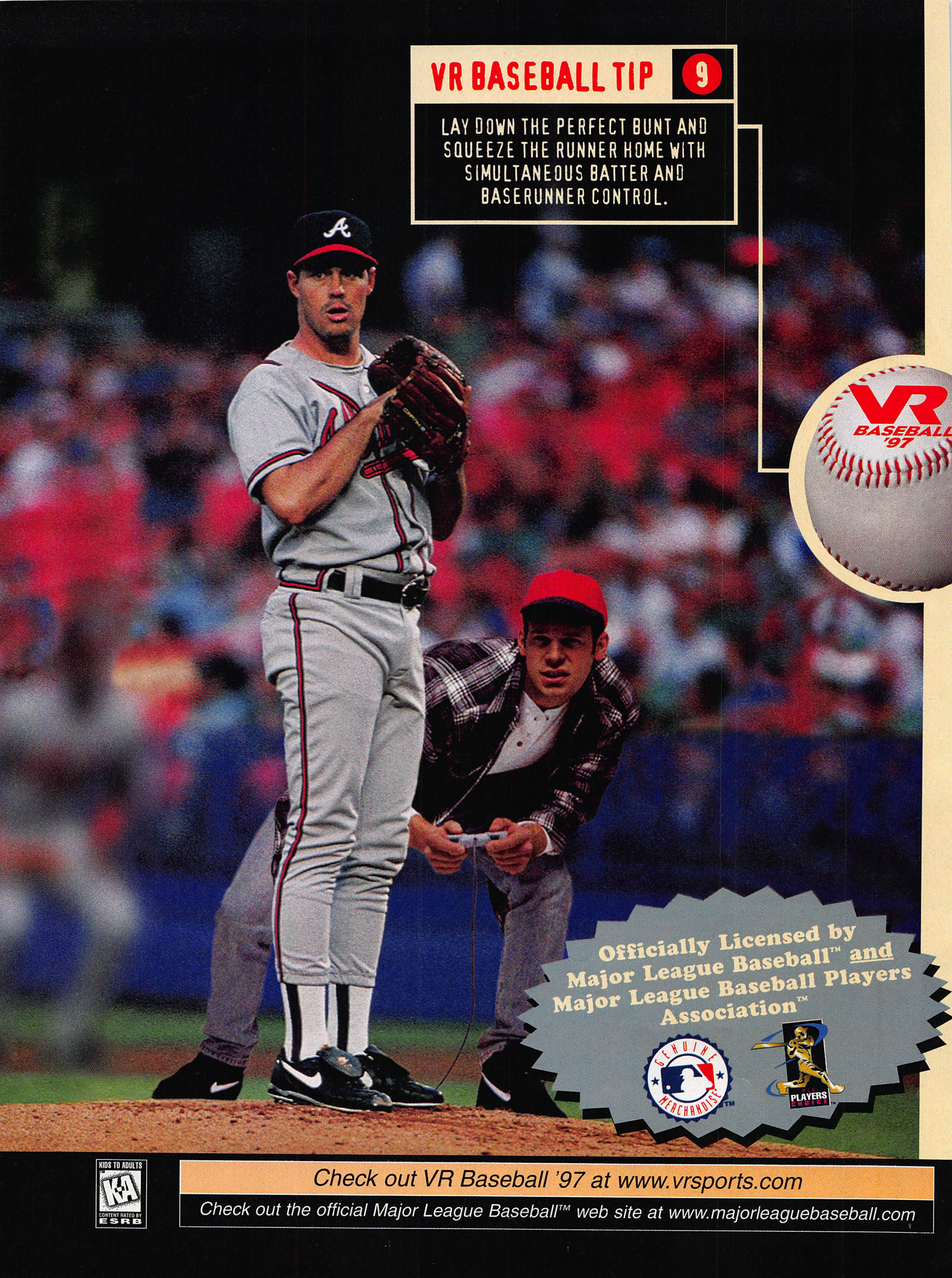


This is *KOF '96* translated almost perfectly onto the Saturn. All of the moves, background detail and animation are present, along with new voices and new arranged tunes that perfectly compliment the 2D fighting action. I particularly like *KOF '96*'s combo system, which feels very close to *SF2*—definitely a good thing in my book! My only real criticism is that some of the characters are a bit unbalanced, which detracts from the heavy two-player battles. Still, there's no denying that this is a polished game, and it's nice to finally see a Neo•Geo game get a perfect conversion.

G 9 C 8 P 7 M 9 O 5 **85**



KONAMI
IF YOU DON'T USE YOUR HEAD
SOMEONE ELSE MIGHT.
The spectre of war looms over the peaceful land of Ishtaria. Terrorism, corruption and depravity run rampant. It's up to you to return the land to democracy, using a strategic combination of wits, muscle and magic. It's an epic confrontation that unfolds on multiple, glorious, 3-D isometric battlefields.
Luckily, you have an awesome array of weapons, spells, booby traps and The Great Sword Vandal-Heart at your command. Plus the greatest weapon of them all-your brain. Enter the world of Vandal-Hearts. Where a sharp sword is no match for a sharp mind.
Classic RPG Combat
3-D Isometric Battlefields
3-D Magic & Spells
RATING PENDING
RP
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATINGS BOARD
PlayStation
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VANDAL-HEARTS



VR BASEBALL TIP 9
LAY DOWN THE PERFECT BUNT AND SQUEEZE THE RUNNER HOME WITH SIMULTANEOUS BATTER AND BASERUNNER CONTROL.
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K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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MAINTAIN CONTROL MARCH 25TH

NEW! VR BASEBALL™ '97.

MORE CONTROL THAN ANY OTHER BASEBALL GAME!

VR Baseball '97 is the next generation baseball game that lets you control both the batter and baserunners simultaneously. Hit and run, tag up, steal, stretch out a double or execute a squeeze play. VR Baseball's completely new, easy-to-use controller design provides total bat control for power, contact, bunt and pull-hitting as well as control over pitch selection and speed with unlimited pitch locations. You can even control a real 3-D camera that let's you play from any position or angle because only VR Baseball has a true 3-D engine.

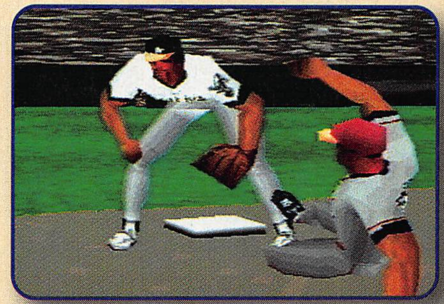
After 3 years of internal development and a total commitment to quality, VR Sports delivers a winning roster for the '97 season:

- FIRST 360° 3-D ONLY — Virtual FieldVision™ technology creates an immersive, ultra-realistic, gaming environment that lets you play the game from any view or perspective. You can even play from the ball's view if you don't mind getting knocked around.
- FIRST 360° 3-D ONLY — Four uniform options per team including updated colors and team logos for 1997. Plus, four play options and three difficulty settings for the skill level most challenging to you.
- FIRST 360° 3-D ONLY — Instant access to pitch selection, speed and control for unlimited plate locations without menus. Total bat control for power, contact, bunt and pull-hitting without tipping your hand to your opponent.
- FIRST 360° 3-D ONLY — Super-fast Season Play mode with top 10 or full stats. Plus, mid-season All-Star voting and game.

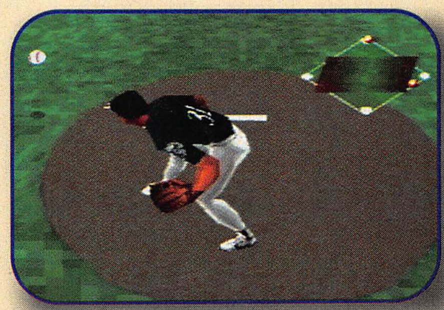
Plus, a true physics model controls velocity, rotation, gravity and air friction for true flight, bounce and roll for varying surfaces like Astroturf, grass, dirt and fences.

VR Baseball '97

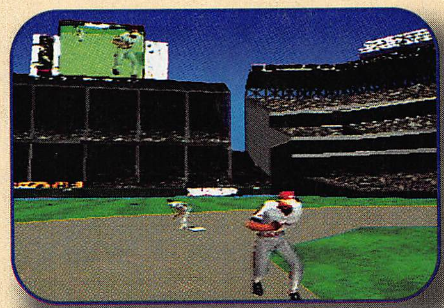
Try it. It's new. It's different. You may never go back to your old game again.



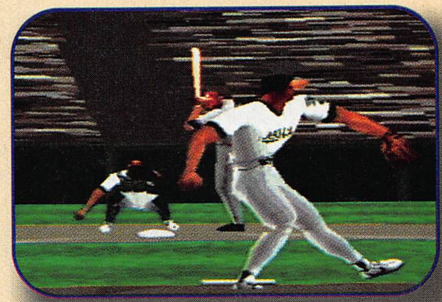
Total control over all aspects of game play including simultaneous batter and baserunner control.



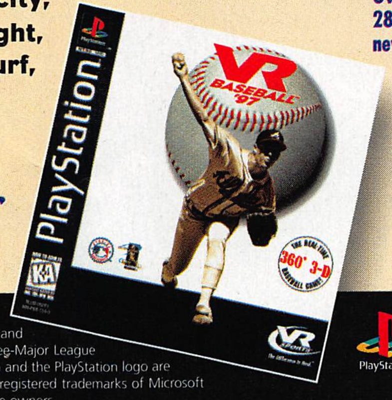
Play baseball in a true real-time 3-D world with unlimited 360° views and motion captured polygon models for all players.



Updated stats, rosters, uniform styles, logos and inter-league play with a real-time in stadium scoreboard and big screen in stadium television.



Over 700 Major League Baseball™ Players and all 28 3-D Major League Baseball™ stadiums including three new stadiums: Atlanta, Anaheim and Oakland.



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PlayStation™

COMING SOON!!!

Clay Fighter

EXTREME OR 63-N'-A-THIRD?

Lock up your children, Clay fans—the Doh is back! Currently under development by Interplay Productions are both a PS and N64 sequel to *Clay Fighter*, the 16-bit sleeper hit that featured animated plasticine models smackin' each other up side the head. Although technically both versions are *Clay Fighter 3*, the PS version will be called *Clay Fighter Extreme*, while the N64 version will come with the 'amusing' moniker, *Clay Fighter 63 1/3* (no, I didn't make that up). Both versions will feature 3D characters ("motion captured" off plasticine models, no doubt), 3D interactive backgrounds (that let you knock your opponent into new areas, KI-style), new characters and the return of some old favorites (e.g. Mr. Frosty, The Blob, Taffy).





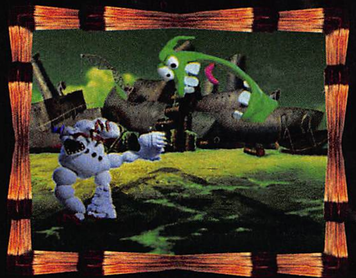


The story finds the Clay Fighters, both new and old, plane-wrecked on the exotic locale of Klaymodo Isle. Here they must do battle against the evil Dr. Klugenheimer Von Kiln (riiiggght), the world infamous and crazed "clayentologist" whose goal in life is to make all the world and the life within it putty in his hands. Will he succeed? His latest 'Clayotic Claymorphosis Mutagen' may guarantee just that! What the heck is CCM? Beats me. But it sure sounds cool.

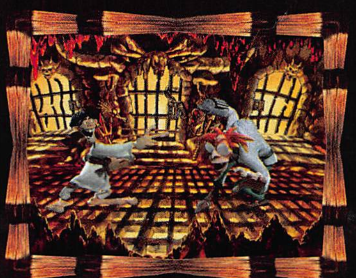
New characters include Houngan, an evil local witch doctor; Lockjaw Pooch, a beagle with a skill-saw maw; a trio of tumblers called the Zappa Yow Yow Boys; and a cyber-bunny named T-Hoppy. The fights take place in locations all over Klaymodo island, including beach and jungle stages, with each character possessing his own background and story line.

There's no word yet on how the *Clay Fighter* control system is going to change to incorporate the new 3D environments, or about any new gameplay features, but rest assured that the slapstick sense of humor and wacky moves that characterized the original games will make a marked return. We'll keep you posted. You lucky people, you. K

THE SHOTS ALONG THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE ARE ACTUAL N64 DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SCREENS. ALL OTHERS ARE MOCK-UPS.





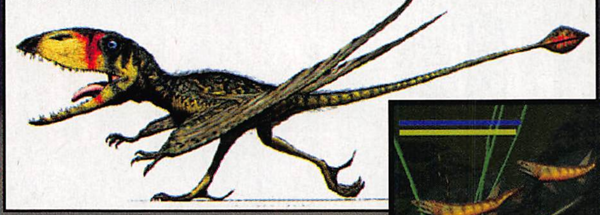






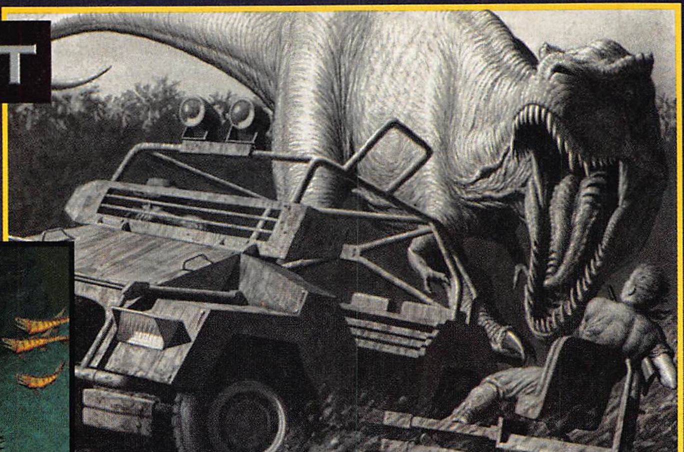

TO HELL WITH YOU.
DOOM 64
Only the N64 could handle this game.
MATURE
M
AGES 17+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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DIMORPHODON





AN EARLY CONCEPT DRAWING OF THE T-REX VS. THE HUNTER

GameFan recently had the chance to visit the DreamWorks offices for a early look at *The Lost World*, the game incarnation of Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* sequel due this summer. An almost guaranteed hit, it's not surprising that a game is being developed around it, for both the PS and Saturn. But with Spielberg involved in initial stages of game creation, *The Lost World* could prove to be above your usual movie based game. What we have been shown thus far looks impressive.

The most striking aspect of the game is the look of the actual dinosaurs themselves. Using proprietary software (which DreamWorks has named Morf-x technology), an amazing level of character fluidity has been achieved. By stretching the dino texture map around the 3D model, typically unsightly polygon overlapping and glitching at the joints is summarily removed. The Morf-x technology also allows for great control, as the real time model simply morphs into whatever position you request. For instance, you can make a dino jump in the middle of a roll with no break in the character's animation, even though this move wasn't necessarily intended by the designers. This constant smoothness almost makes the characters look prerendered, even though they're all rendered on the fly.

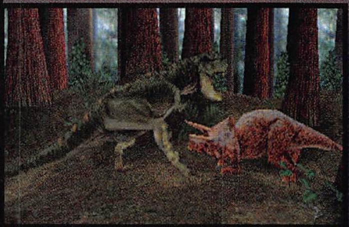
As for the game itself, it is presented in the now familiar 2.5-D of *Pandemonium* and *Clockwork* fame. And it's easy to see why, as it allows for the precision movements of 2D while still allowing for a cinematic flare with a tagged moving camera. It still looks 3D, even though you don't have complete freedom of movement. So though you are limited to a set path, the designers have broken this up by implementing a branching system allowing you take different paths within levels.



In the early version we were shown, the sound effects had yet to be completely implemented. Some effects were in, such as the now classic T-Rex scream—and it sounded great, just like in the movie. A booming symphonic score is planned, of which a MIDI version was in place, and it too was very good; very well composed. In fact, the developers even half-seriously joked that it's difficult to get any work done with the soundtrack attracting their attention.

The Lost World is still very early, so final play mechanics have yet to be nailed down. There are no enemies to attack as of yet, and there's still a great deal of overall tweaking that needs to be done. But, if indeed, the rest of the game turns out to be as impressive as the dino's animation, another rare occurence of a genuinely good game inspired by a film may be at hand. Look for further updates in the coming months on what is sure to be a big game this summer. ***SD***





PERHAPS THE BIGGEST DRAW OF *THE LOST WORLD* IS THE ABILITY TO CONTROL SEVERAL DIFFERENT DINOSAURS. THESE RANGE FROM THE SMALL AND NIMBLE COMPY, TO THE GREATEST LAND PREDATOR OF ALL TIME, THE TYRANNOSAURUS REX. HEALTH IS ACQUIRED BY EATING FALLEN DINOS.



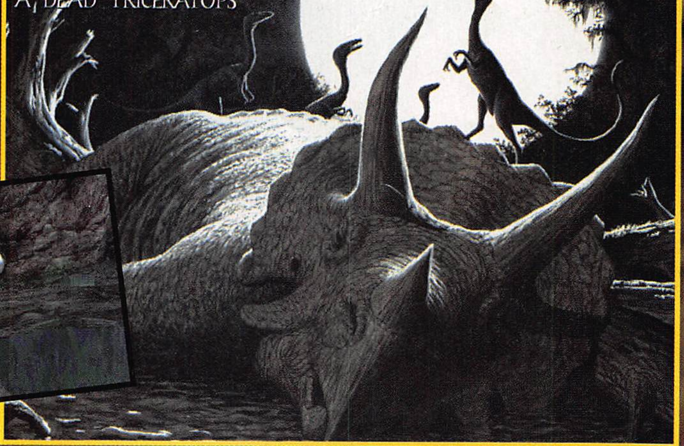


THE LOST WORLD
JURASSIC PARK™

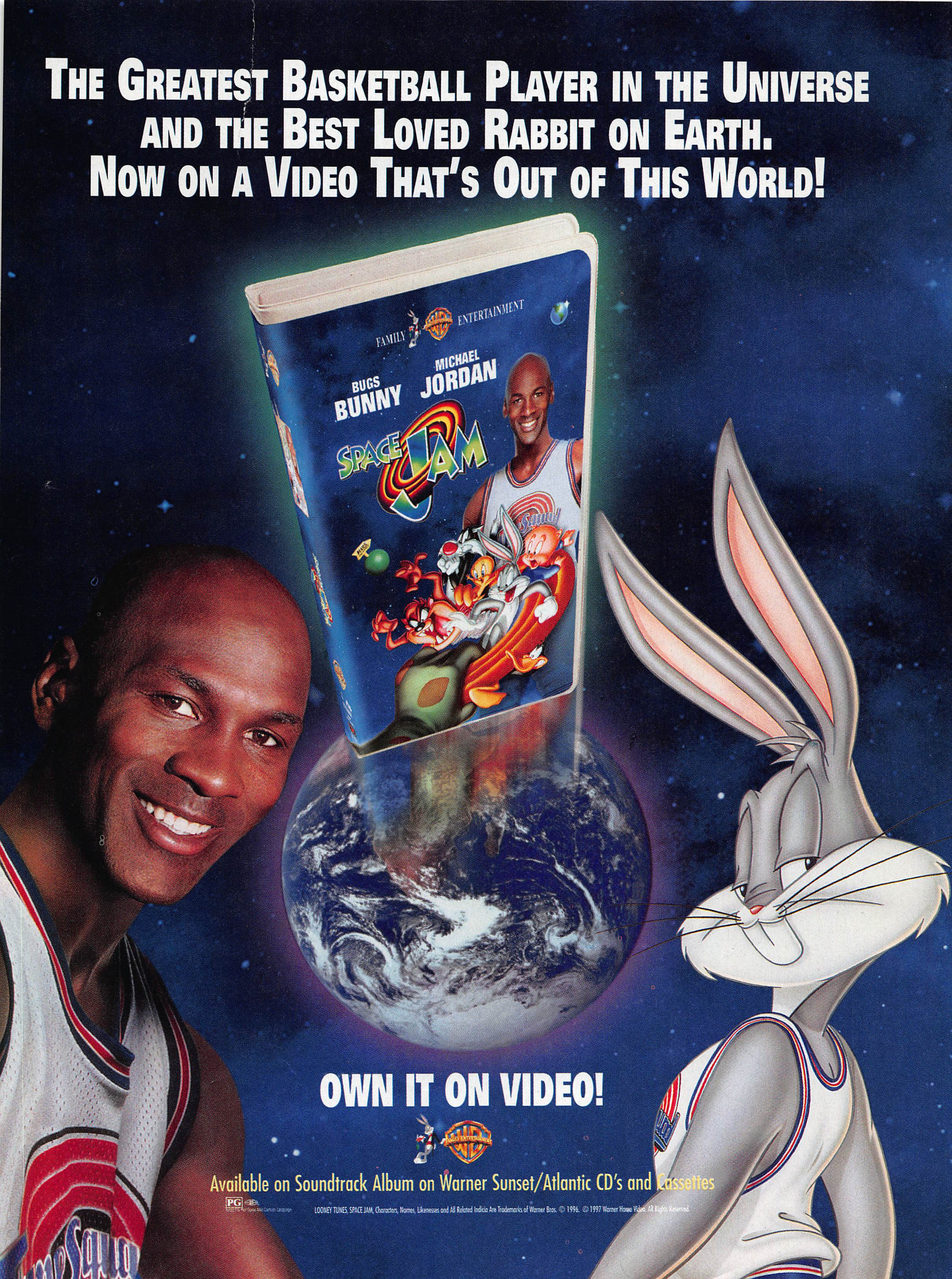


CARNOTAURUS





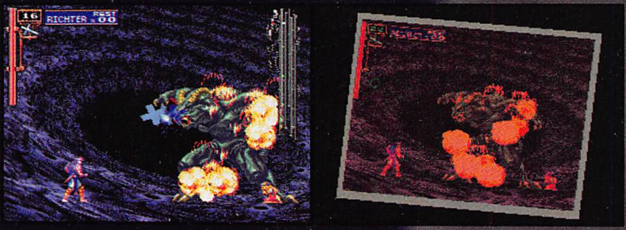
COMPYS FEAST ON A DEAD TRICERATOPS


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JOURNEY BACK TO 1792
and the Transylvanian Countryside of Romania







After a series of epic battles, Richter Belmont finally succeeded in destroying Count Dracula, the ancient vampire who had been most recently resurrected by the dark priest, Shaft. One night 4 years later, under the bright glare of the moon Richter mysteriously vanished.

With no idea of where to begin her search Maria Renard set out to look for him. It was then that fate intervened...



Castlevania, the castle of Dracula, which is rumored to appear only once every century, suddenly and mysteriously materialized.

Meanwhile, powerful forces were at work in the life of a man named Alucard. The very same Alucard who had previously teamed up with Ralph C. Belmont to destroy his immortal father, Vlad Tepes aka Count Dracula. Alucard, in order to rid the world of his own cursed blood line, sealed off his powers and entered what was supposed to be an eternal slumber....

But now, that sleep has been disturbed. Alucard is aware of the evil that has once again arisen in his homeland.

The time has come once more for the forces of good and evil to engage in their ancient battle.

Dracula's castle beckons for you, in...

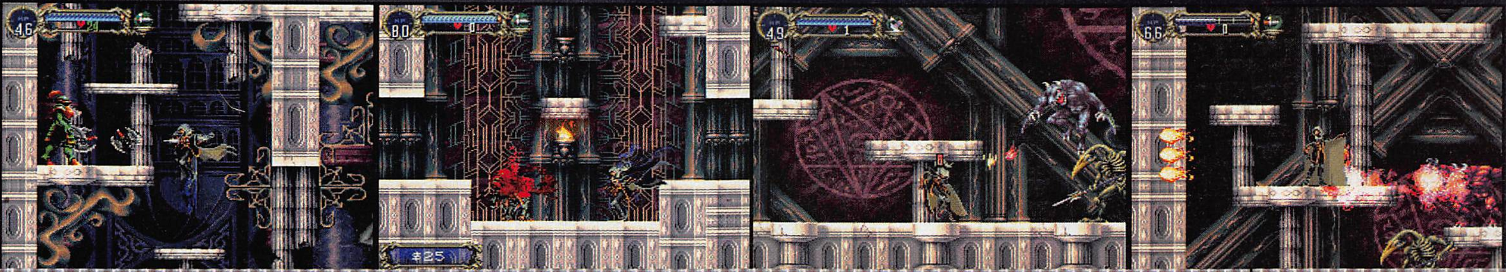


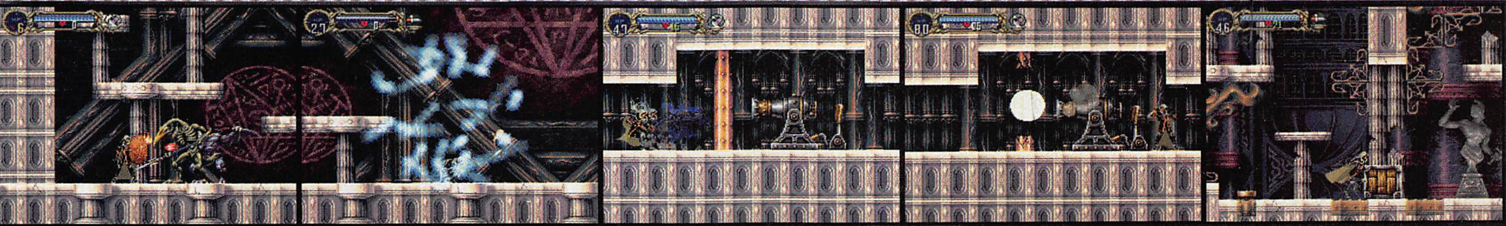
And so our adventure begins as Alucard enters the castle and you first glimpse the most highly animated character in Castlevania history...





ALCHEMY LABORATORY





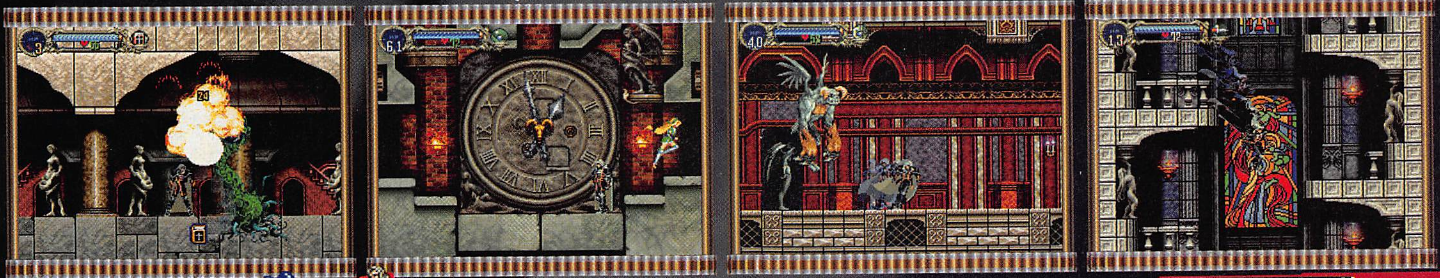


As I'm writing this, listening to the music as the game sits idle, I am reminded how I once felt about gaming some years ago, before they'd broken the 3D barriers, when a great game was more of a phenomenon, like Castlevania 4 on SNES or Bloodlines on Genesis. The same can be said of many an 8-bit game as well. But things have changed considerably... or have they? Those of you who've been around for some years will undoubtedly celebrate the arrival of Castlevania on the PS, but I fear that those accustomed to 3D and polygons may view CV as less than it really is. For those people I would recommend perhaps a trek through Super Metroid followed by this game when it's released, which is laid out in a very similar configuration. Or just take my word for it: If there is a game which could cause one to stand in the moonlight, close their eyes and summon a theme, Castlevania is it. As you play this phenomenon among 2D hand-drawn splendor, the music which will accompany you is among the finest ever produced, as it has been with all of the Castlevania adventures.

Since the storyline proceeded this introduction, I'll get right to the game then. After playing out the climactic ending of Dracula X (the last installment in the series) as Richter Belmont, you'll witness something truly incredible... Alucard. The son of Dracula himself, this character is drawn and animated beyond belief. He is so graceful in his movements that for the ten hours I've been playing I'm still in awe of his movements. As you acquire powerful items and weapons he becomes all the more mesmerizing. As lead characters go, he is the best I've yet seen.

The levels in this installment are all linked, similar to CV2 on the NES or, as I mentioned before, Super Metroid. As soon as you reach the Library you'll want to purchase the map and begin filling in the vast areas before you. As you journey

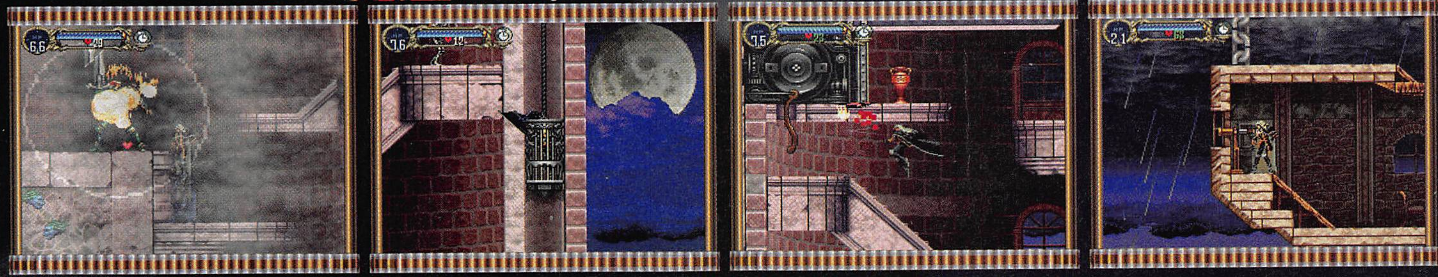
MARBLE GALLERY

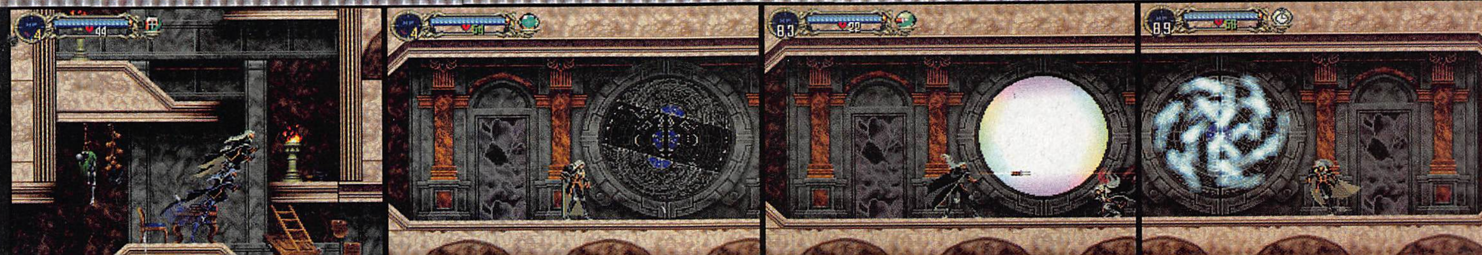




on, you'll talk to Maria quite often and meet some of the strangest creatures ever imagined. Each is accompanied by some crazy effects as they perish, which I'll get to later. As you search high and low amongst cavernous locations throughout and outside of the castle, the emphasis is placed on finding magic spells, flying friends, precious stones which you can exchange for money, magic capes, potions and other items necessary to unlock the wealth of areas you can't access. Areas on the map are not highlighted until you've traversed them... and it's a big castle.

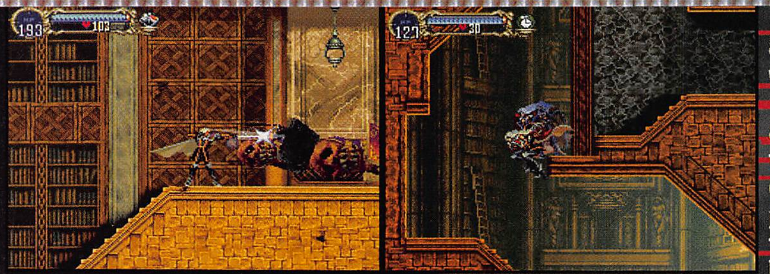
OUTER WALL





LIBRARY

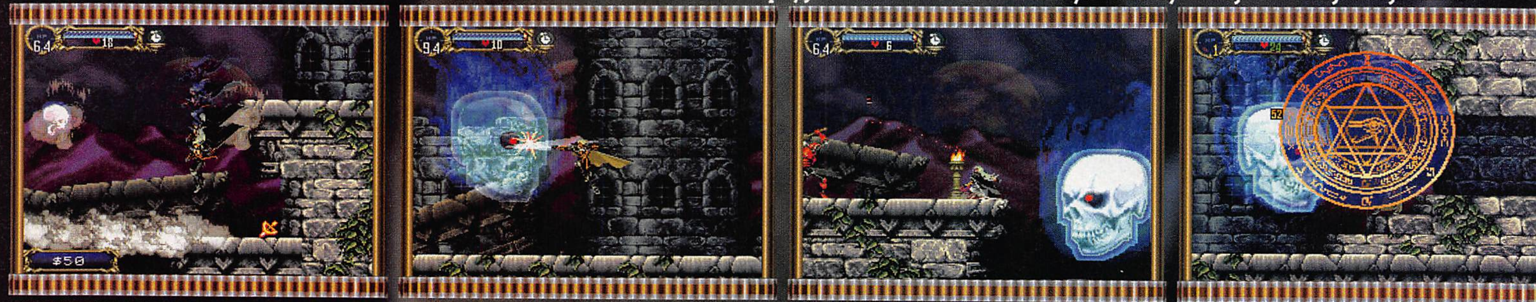


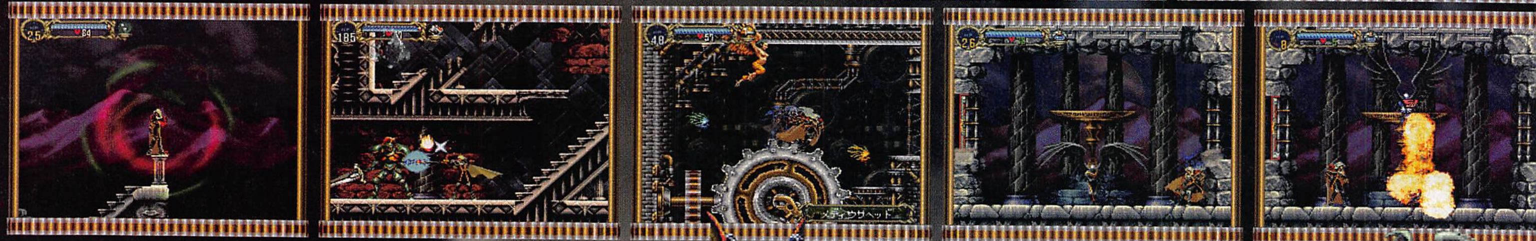


Not unlike every RPG ever created but new in the CV saga, Alucard gains MP (magic points) and HP (hit points) as he defeats enemies. So the longer you play, the stronger he gets, which makes the exploration element quite rewarding.

Graphically speaking, if looks could kill, I'd be dead. CV has some of the most beautiful art I have ever seen in a video game, from the backgrounds to the enemy sprites, of which there are more–far more–than ever before, all are a sight for sore eyes. Even in the absence of parallax, the backgrounds are stunning, but for the most part you'll be playing among parallax you never thought you'd ever see on the PS. Up to six luscious levels with even the tiniest far off detail moving deep in the screen. But it doesn't stop there. Beyond the parallax are special effects which far surpass any previous in the 2D realm. It is in the Royal Chapel where your jaw will drop as you gape at layers of clouds blowing forth or negotiate a polygonal church which scrolls four ways seamlessly with light reflecting through onto the pews below. Breathtaking. In the Clock Tower, the weather is equally unsteady as layers of fog twist in the background and huge glowing skulls fly about, hungry for a taste of human (well, half human at least) flesh. Additionally, every enemy you kill is accompanied by some awesome effect like a pillar of fire or ethereal blast. It's just amazing. The first time Alucard jumped through the water I almost cried.

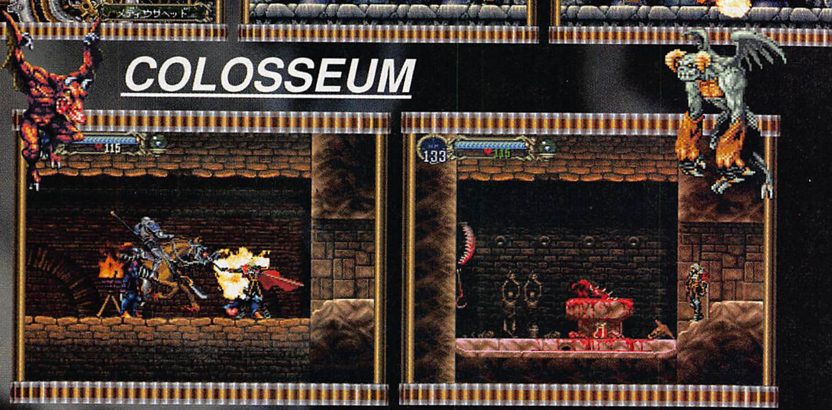
CLOCK TOWER





As I'm sure you've already assumed, the control is utter perfection to the point of pure gaming bliss, and the bosses... forget about it. I'll describe the one which concludes this layout. It's a massive nugget of twisted bodies and, as you swipe it (with, by this time, a powerful blade), many drop off and come forth while some burst apart, limbs flying. As you hack away, eventually you'll uncover the hideous core, a slimy artery with laser tracking. Only Konami can assemble such beautiful masses of goo for us to shred. I'm 70% into the adventure and, as I'm sure you've gathered, loving it. With every new level comes music from the gods along with more creatures I've never seen, my magic spells are multiplying and I'm armed to the teeth. Alucard can carry two weapons or one and a shield along with equipped spells, capes, and armor.

COLOSSEUM



The game has gotten so good in parts I've actually stopped playing to savor what I've seen. Before I close this (ahem) preview and in case you're wondering, the original CV enemies are all here, the flying medusa heads, crumbling skeletons, shiny knights, along with many more twisted beasts from Transylvania.

Believe it or not, there is a lot more to tell, regarding the storyline, hidden places and faces, etc., but I've been sworn to secrecy. With the imminent review, these things will come. Until then... Count the days.

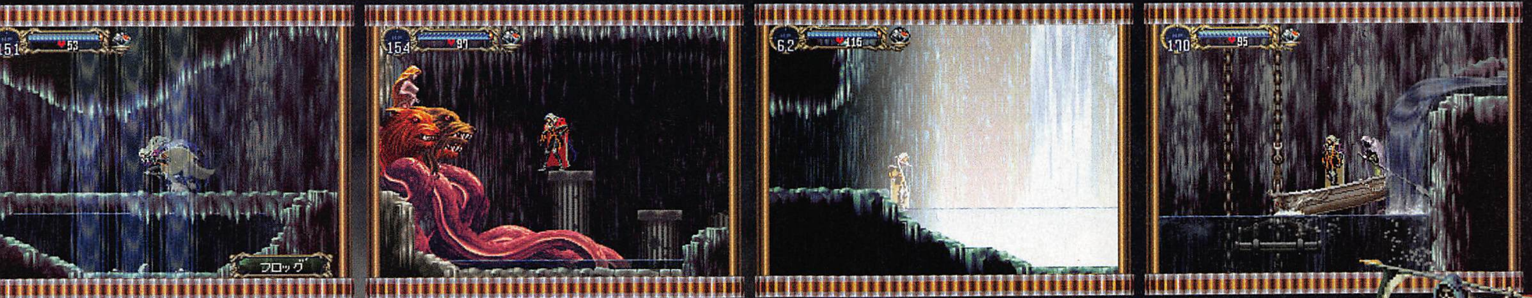


ROYAL CHAPEL





GROUND WATER VEIN







Castlevania is a huge game, so if you're thinking you've seen it all, or even most of it, in this preview, I'm happy to say you have not. We will of course, return with maps, tips, and in depth strategies regarding hidden items, weapons and all the rest of the glorious parts that make Castlevania an event amongst games. 2D is back! Let's hope it's here to stay!
—E.

MORE CASTLEVANIA TO COME...



PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

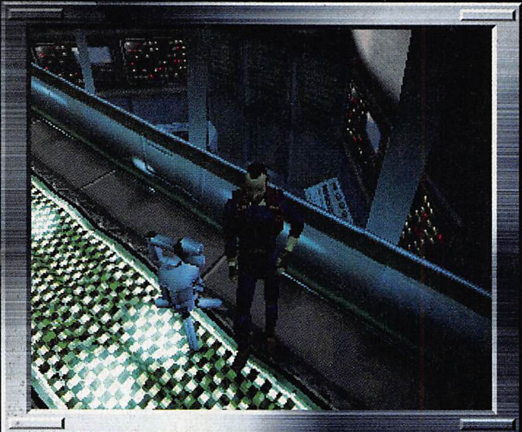
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - TBA

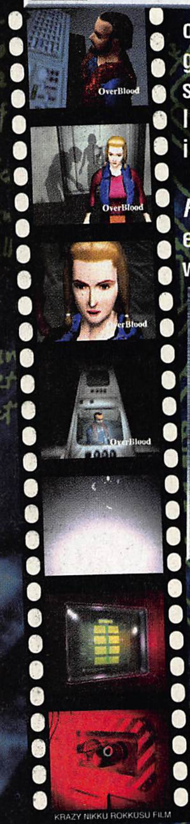


E. STORM
Give me six a year like this and I'll be the happiest man alive.



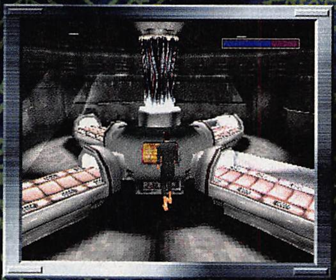


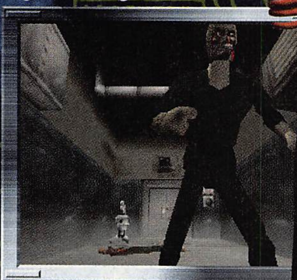
I was just as surprised as Takuhi the first time I saw Riverhill's *OverBlood*. We imagined it would be a total *Resident Evil* rip-off, but after playing it once, the comparisons ended. I mean, who would have expected this genre to go real time (as in real-time polygons) so soon. *OverBlood* has a powerful storyline and strong exploration elements, but the fully realized 3D environments require all kinds of skills—like platforming, fighting, etc. It's fair to say that *OverBlood* caught me off guard. EA's porting it over from Japan, so we thought we'd give you another look.





The first thing you'll notice about *OverBlood* is the amazing 3D engine. As opposed to *RE* (or *Perfect Weapon*, or *Time Commando*), *OverBlood* is shifting a playfield constructed entirely of polygons, not bit-maps or pre-renders. The scary thing is, and you might want to check out the screenshots now, sometimes the areas look so good I forget that





they're just texture-mapped polygons and actually see them as real environments. They can be viewed from almost any angle, and often the polygons will be layered within one another (such as objects within glass casings, windows, etc.) creating a dazzling effect. Many areas have that strange depth sensation, where you're walking into the screen and the environment suddenly seems to be a whole lot bigger than you thought.

OverBlood doesn't play as well as it looks (*that* would be something), but I can handle the problems. Lars, the main character, has really stiff control. And, as I've mentioned, *OverBlood* throws a little platforming action into the mix, so stiff control (lame jumping, slow response time) doesn't help. Thankfully, this type of game doesn't need perfectly accurate controls to play properly, but man, it would've been nice.

Either way, it's cool to see another Japanese title making its way stateside. Although I have yet to see how well the voice and text translation was handled by EA, I'm sure they'll do a fine job, as always. Once we get the final, I'll be here with the review. *G*




OverBlood

P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - RIVERHILLSOFT
PUBLISHER - ELECTRONIC ARTS
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS -1
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - APRIL



GLITCH
HAND ME THAT TOE TAG, WILL YA?


BLOW DOORS OR BLOW CHOW!
FEATURES:
• 25+ cars to choose from
• Race in either direction on 5 different tracks
• Includes original Pikes Peak Hill Climb
• 12 different camera angles
• Build and design your own tracks using the first-of-it's-kind track editor
• Design your own car, tires, suspension, color and more!
• 1 or 2 player action
PEAK PERFORMANCE™
ATLUS
PIKES PEAK INTERNATIONAL HILL CLIMB
RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PlayStation
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It would seem that Sony's PlayStation has been around long enough and reached a high enough level of market penetration that more interesting and experimental games are reaching store shelves. Psygnosis' *Sentient* is one such game.



In *Sentient*, you take on the role of Garitt Sherova. On your way to Space Station Icarus, your ship crash lands in its docking bay (which is nicely detailed in the intro), and you are in a race against time as the station's orbit decays and is pulled towards the corona of the sun. From here, your adventure begins and you soon find out that all is not as it appears on the seemingly doomed space station.

I suppose one could describe *Sentient* as a science fiction RPG. There are things to puzzle over and people to talk to. And these are some strange looking people indeed. All of the characters are full three dimensional models with some insane looking faces mapped onto the head polys. As bizarre as it looks, it's also quite cool as the characters have the

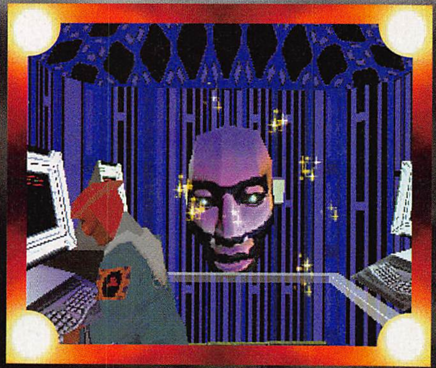
Psygnosis Takes Interaction To A New Level!

sentient







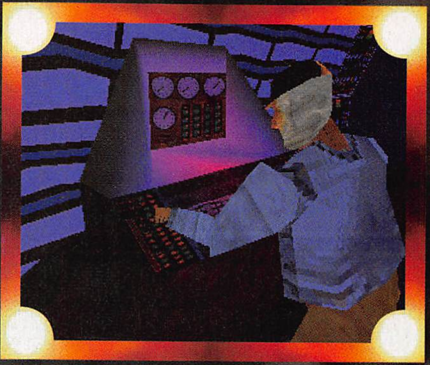


ability to emote by slight changes in their facial expressions. In fact, you yourself have this ability. As you interact with the characters, a small representation of your face appears in the lower left hand corner of the screen allowing you to alter your expression between varying degrees of happy or angry.

Most elaborate, however, is the system allowing the player to speak to the inhabitants of Icarus Station. By selecting different bits of sentences from a menu, a relatively complex and specific statement or question can be constructed. The combination of your facial expressions and the enhanced query and declaration system allow for new level of "real life" conversation hitherto unknown to the likes of the PlayStation.

In the end however, all these accouterments mean nothing if the game isn't any fun to play. I'm as big a critic of the shortened attention span of late twentieth-century society as the next like-minded individual, but the pacing of this game can be quite slow at times. Perhaps this would seem less of a problem if the settings of the game were more diverse. Basically, be prepared to do a lot of walking along a lot of similar looking corridors. Indeed, aside from different colored lighting, all corridors look basically the same. There are, however, some nicely detailed rooms and there is only a bit of texture warping when you get too close.

Still, once you get into it, the story is quite engaging. And you do get a feeling of really talking to people through the well-developed speech system and recurring characters. Thankfully, there is also incentive to play more than once as multiple paths lead to multiple endings. I respect Psygnosis' effort to try something new. While not totally successful, in my opinion, it still impresses. If you can look past the lack of action, you'll more than likely find yourself completely immersed in the story, trying to figure out what to do next to save the station and solve other mysteries aboard Icarus. Oh, and don't do that with your face. It might stay that way. ***SD***



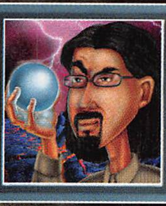




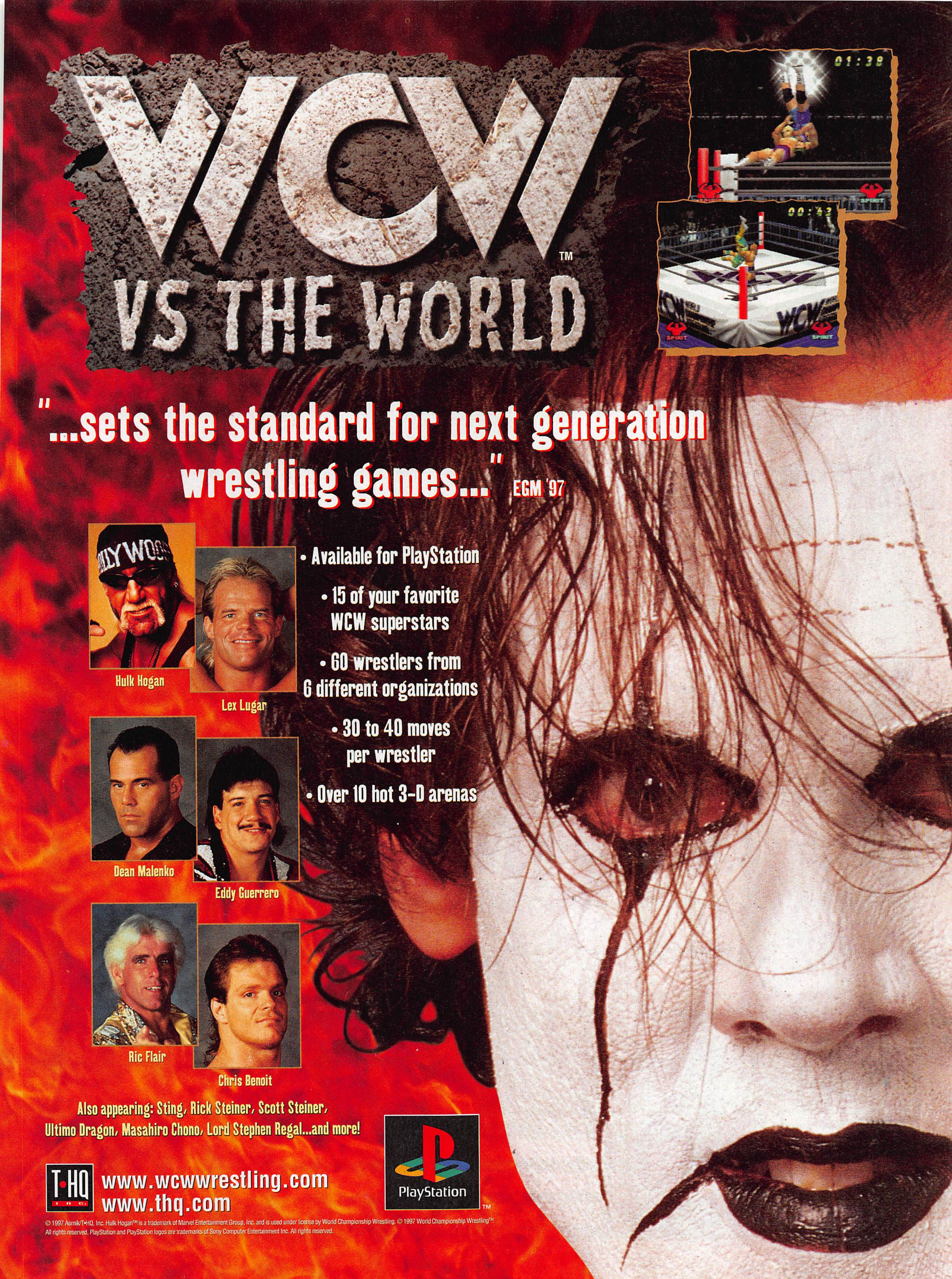


R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



SUBSTANCE D
YOUR FACE MIGHT STAY THAT WAY!

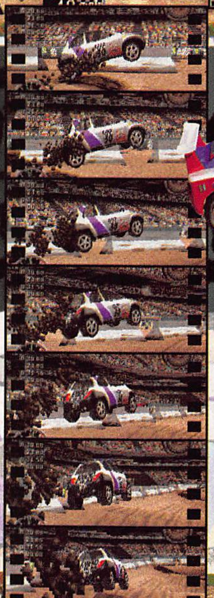

WCW
VS THE WORLD
"...sets the standard for next generation wrestling games..." EGM '97
• Available for PlayStation
• 15 of your favorite WCW superstars
• 60 wrestlers from 6 different organizations
• 30 to 40 moves per wrestler
• Over 10 hot 3-D arenas
Hulk Hogan
Lex Lugar
Dean Malenko
Eddy Guerrero
Ric Flair
Chris Benoit
Also appearing: Sting, Rick Steiner, Scott Steiner, Ultimo Dragon, Masahiro Chono, Lord Stephen Regal...and more!
T•HQ
www.wcwwrestling.com
www.thq.com
PlayStation
© 1997 Asmik/T•HQ, Inc. Hulk Hogan™ is a trademark of Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. and is used under license by World Championship Wrestling. © 1997 World Championship Wrestling™. All rights reserved. PlayStation and PlayStation logos are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.











RALLY CROSS

Okay, time to get dirty. *Rally Cross* takes you off-road racin' like nothin' else! This game keeps me playin' for hours on end, which is a rare thing these days. To put it plainly: This game's a blast!



The first thing you'll notice (after you've turned off the eighties-sounding music) is the incredible graphics. From the flares of the arena lights in the stadium course and the snow falling in the alpine course, to the awesome lighting you'll see (not to mention the leaves you'll kick up) while motoring through the English countryside in the garden course, this game is gorgeous.... The frame rate's excellent, too, and there's virtually no pop-up. Look closely, and you can actually see the driver and passenger in every vehicle!







The sound effects, as well, are top-notch. Every bump and jump is accompanied by an amazing creak or groan (at least), and you'll really appreciate the sploosh of the mud or small stream you'll inevitably find yourself traversing. The music, however (as mentioned earlier), leaves something to be desired....

The toughest part of this game (judging by the general response here at GameFan), has to be the control. The four wheel, independent suspension makes for some bizarre bounces, and learning every dip and bump on the courses is a must. At first, you'll spend a lot of time upside down, bangin' the L2 and R2 buttons, trying to flip yourself back over. If you are easily frustrated, stay away from *Rally Cross*, or you'll go broke replacing shattered PS controllers.

With six courses, three variations of each, and two directions, you've effectively got thirty-six different tracks to choose from, although you start with only three. Beating various types of seasons will open up the rest, and you'll eventually have twenty (yes, *twenty*!) different four-wheelers from which to choose. Also, after Normal, Head-On, and Mixed seasons have been beaten, you'll get to try your hand at the one of the most frustratingly fun modes of play I've ever seen: Suicide mode, in which your three opponents race the track *in the opposite direction*. This makes for some spectacular crashes, but winning a Suicide season at the Pro level is extremely difficult.





All in all, a great game from Sony Interactive, with plenty of challenge and depth for the ninja gamers out there, and plenty of fun for the occasional gamer, too. I haven't had this much fun since *Jet Moto*! If you're a fan of unusual racers, I highly recommend *Rally Cross*. **R**







THIS IS MERELY HALF OF THE AVAILABLE VEHICLES IN RALLY CROSS! ONLY THE HARDEST OF HARD-CORE AMONG YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF BEHIND THE WHEEL OF THAT CAMOUFLAGE FOUR-WHEELER ON THE END, THOUGH!!! (THEN AGAIN, IF I CAN BEAT IT...)

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SONY INTERACTIVE	# OF PLAYERS - 1-4
PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - AAAAARRGH!
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



REUBUS
NO WIMPS ALLOWED!



They have been born of fire —
hopefully they won't melt.
CLAY FIGHTER 63 1/3™
Developed and published by
Interplay™
BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™
www.interplay.com
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
NINTENDO 64
© 1997 Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. Clay Fighter 63 1/3 and Interplay are trademarks of Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. Nintendo, Nintendo 64, 3-D 'N' are trademarks of Nintendo of America, Inc. All rights reserved. All other copyrights and trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - STUDIO E

PUBLISHER - PLAYMATES

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - APRIL



E. STORM
THE MOST FUN YOU'LL EVER HAVE ON 2 WHEELS... WITHOUT LEAVING HOME.

VMX RACING

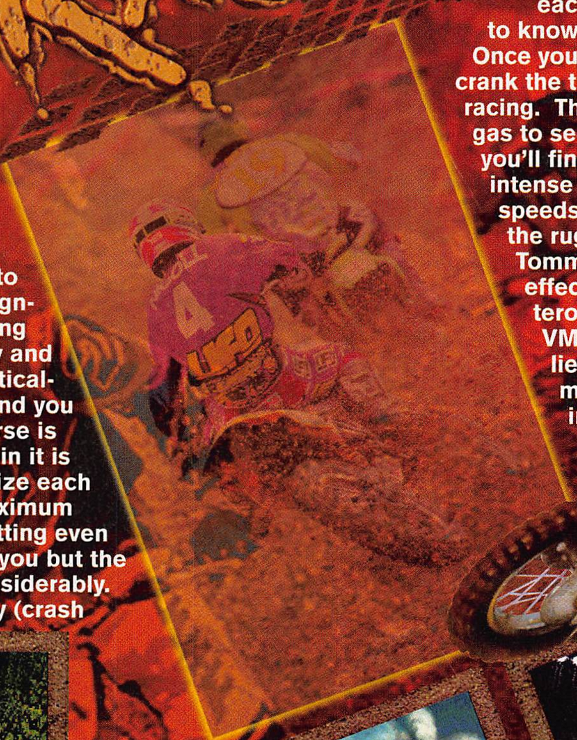
Tweaked, tuned, and ready for your approval, VMX Racing, the first PS motocrosser, is ready for action.

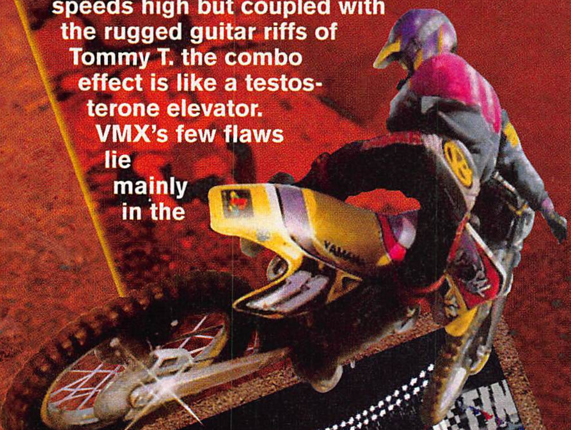
Six tracks and four teams made the final cut in which you can choose practice, two-player, or circuit modes. In the much needed and thankfully provided practice phase of VMX you'll master the varied courses which range from the super tight, exhibited in the two stadiums (New Orleans And Anaheim), to the wide open spaces of Orlando, New England, The Pacific Northwest, and San Jose.

Without intensive course dissection you'll spend the bulk of your race day face down. Partly because the control is ultra-touchy. In order to make tight hairpins do-able the designers have inserted very precise steering increments. Touch the D-Pad slightly and the rider's trajectory changes dramatically, hold it down and hit the throttle and you can turn on a dime. Since each course is made up essentially of twisting terrain it is required that you thoroughly memorize each track and its nuances. This is of maximum importance, because not only will hitting even the slightest off-course sprite crash you but the loose terrain will slow you down considerably. Should you fall behind, which is easy (crash three times on the 1st lap and you may as well reset) in VMX, the pack will quickly pass as they stay pretty tight throughout the first lap. Bring the holeshot and hold the lead through a lap and a half and you'll get some breathing room. The camera distance you choose (from 4) also has a profound impact on the control, so practice with each, find the one you like and then get to know each track.

Once you've achieved oneness with the control crank the tunes and get ready for some serious racing. Though totally unforgiving, VMX is a gas to see and play. Once you enter the zone you'll find the racing action some of the most intense around. Not only are the speeds high but coupled with the rugged guitar riffs of Tommy T. the combo effect is like a testosterone elevator.

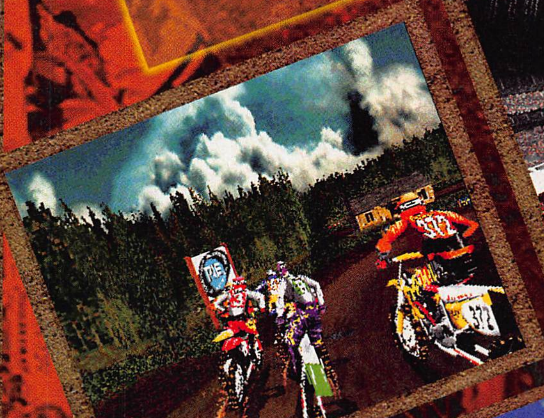
VMX's few flaws lie mainly in the

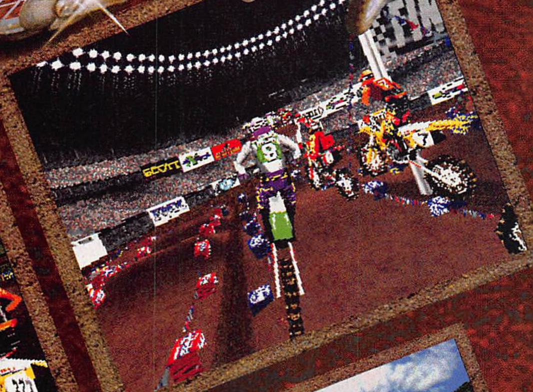


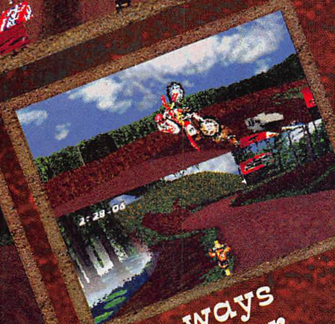


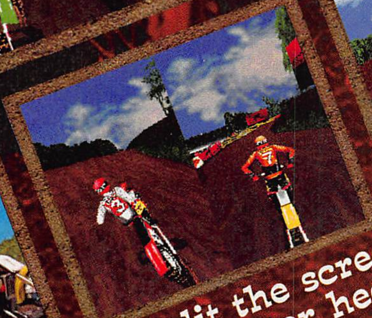












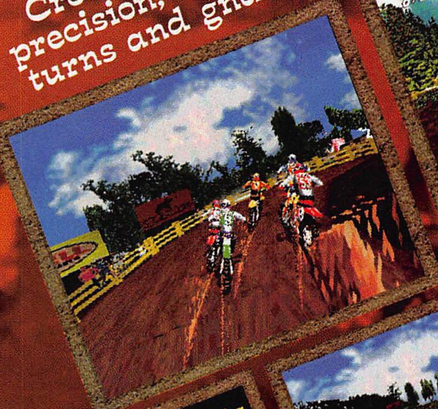


Split the screen two ways and enter heated 2 player competition. The frame rate goes chug-a-lug, but it's still a kick.

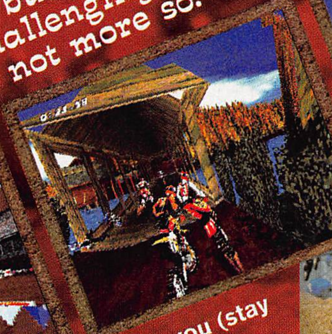


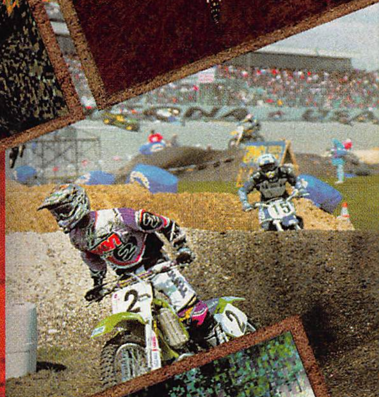
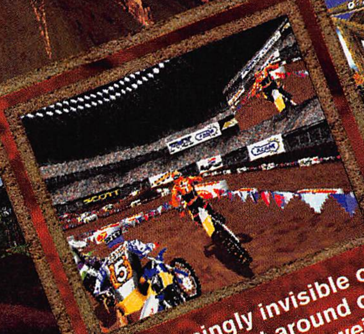


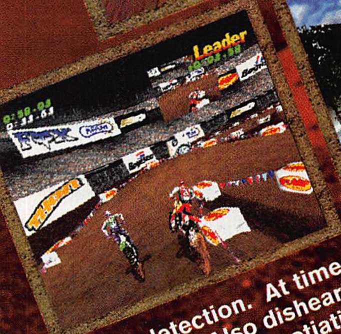

Indoors, Super Cross is an exercise in precision, laced with tight turns and gnarly jumps...

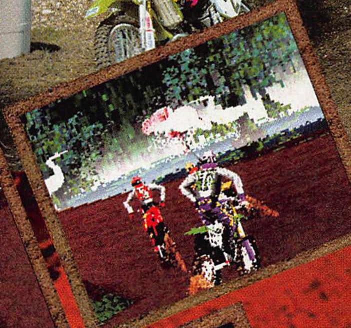



Outdoors, things are more spread out, but equally challenging... if not more so.



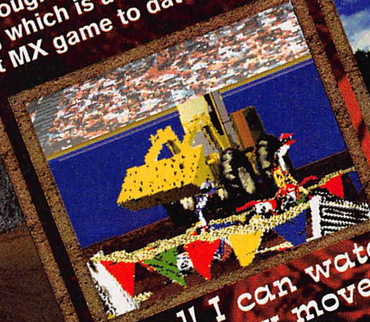
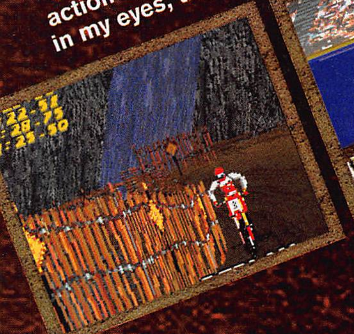






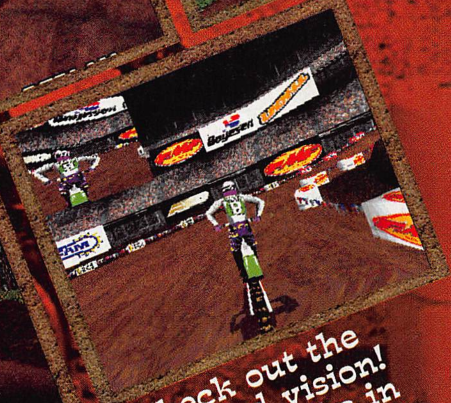


collision detection. At times huge objects are forgiving while seemingly invisible ones crash you (stay ON the track). Also disheartening is that the riders don't put their foot out around corners; standard body english when negotiating tight corners. Additionally, the throttle control is weird. The bikes don't howl distinctive gear changes, but rather moan rather monotone 2-stroke sound fx. One button provides throttle and another 'burst'. I just used burst for everything and have never touched the brakes. They serve no purpose. Simply feather the burst to slow down and hammer it to turn sharply or, dart to clear the triples or zip through a tight turn. The 2-plyr. mode is a nice feature, although it slows down the action considerably, which is almost welcome. Overall, VMX isn't perfect but its darn good and remains in my eyes, the best MX game to date. Until Yu Suzuki decides to get dirty it will likely stay that way. *ES*



Cool! I can watch my every move in replay. Look at me go! Wheeeee!

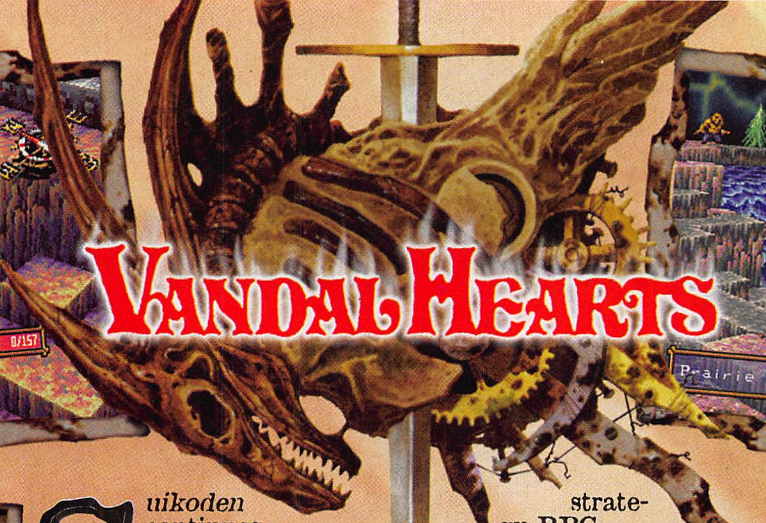
Check out the diamond vision! (For the folks in the cheap seats)











VANDAL HEARTS





Suikoden continues to be a best seller in the US, and *Final Fantasy VII* is a runaway (understatement of the year) hit in Japan. RPGs are back! Unfortunately, if you don't play imports, and you live in North America, you're probably used to slim pickin's, high prices, and bad translations. Alas, there is hope! CD-based systems make the price-point negligible, and translations can be completed in a few short months–if not sooner (*Wild Arms*, for example, is a quicky). The translation teams are getting better too; way better. "Engrish" is pretty much a thing of the past, and most translators finally have a clue when it comes to tasteful humor, strong writing, and good box and instructions artwork. Time to dig into Konami's latest translation, the strategy RPG *Vandal Hearts*.

Skipping the import *Vandal Hearts* turned out to be a smart move. The storyline is good, really good. In a strategy-type game, this is so important. The translators have chosen wisely, holding back on the dumb humor, and emphasizing the drama and action. In *Vandal Hearts*, you play the role of Ash Lambert: leader of the Defense Special Force, a crack merc division of the Ishtarian army. Sinister politicians decide that the government must rule by the sword, and the army becomes a crazed militia force. Despite his sworn allegiance to the army, Ash cannot allow his tyrannical superiors to continue their blood-reign over the population. 15 years earlier, his father was forced to make the same decision, as the Ishtarian government sought to dominate, not govern, their people. He fought valiantly, but was



Ash



R REVIEW

PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - KCET*
- PUBLISHER - KONAMI
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
- AVAILABLE - APRIL



GLITCH
RPG gods? Yes Nick, Yes!





Eleni



*Konami Computer Entertainment Tokyo





eventually cut down in battle. The government covered their tracks with lies, and the Lambert name became synonymous with treason for many years. And so, Ash must decide: Should he simply follow orders to avoid suffering the same legacy of humiliation? Or should he infiltrate the corrupt government, and put an end to the senseless bloodshed? He's the good guy, so go figure. You can have the story all to yourself when you pick-up your own copy of *VH*...for now, it's on to gameplay (beautiful, perfect gameplay).

Vandal Hearts has every gameplay element I



First Suikoden, now this... Konami = RPG gods!



Diego





could ever need in a strategy game, without being overly complex. In battle, moving your troops is accomplished *Shining Force*-style (flashing strips), indicating how far you can move, or how far away missile attacks can strike. You can check out anyone's (good or evil) movement, anytime, by simply clicking on them. The multi-level battlefields affect movement rates (going uphill, through swampy land, etc.), but certain characters maneuver these conditions better than others. In other words, you have to play the environments as hard as you'd play the enemies. Another strategic factor: Counter-attacks. Every time somebody attacks, their victim is allowed an automatic return-hit. This works into the movement strategy, 'cause if you let the enemies surround you, not only will all primary blows hit, but every counter-attack as well (big pain!). Do you see the synergy of play-mechanics? It's perfect. Battles are so logic-driven, so second-nature, I guarantee you'll be personalizing your tactics at every turn.

Vandal Hearts also has generally good music, great polygonal graphics (the texture art is nice), and quick loading times. Best of all, there's an in-battle save that allows you to come back to the exact same spot, mid-battle, anytime. Anyway, I've been a strategy RPG player for years and years and I implore you to trust these final words: *Vandal Hearts* is the most enjoyable strategy game I've played in quite a while. It's also one of the best PS games available (nice one Konami, you rule!). *Vandal Hearts* screams "BUY ME!"

Clint

G









TAIL of the SUN

WILD, PURE, SIMPLE LIFE

























Tail of the Sun is a first for Sony for a number of reasons. It is one of the first so-called 'alternative' games to be released on the PlayStation, one of the first bold moves for Sony (i.e. you don't gun down tanks or wrestle with Tae Kwon Do experts in this title) and definitely the first almost exclusively featuring cave-people. Now, the Japanese punter may fork out numerous Yen for odd and compelling gaming experiences like this, but the more conservative US gamer? Well, Sony is giving you the chance to change your attitude and play more than the usual array of PlayStation console titles with this offering. And after days of constant evolving, I'm extremely happy that they did.

Forget your pre-conceived ideas about video games; Artdink is about to show everyone outside of Japan just how unique, fresh and exciting ideas can be translated onto silicon. With the previous (and undoubtedly excellent and trippy) *Aquanaut's Holiday* under their belts, Artdink has travelled to the next realm of undiscovered video-gaming and brought us *Wild, Pure, Simple Life: Tail of the Sun*. From the very moment the cave paintings start to dance and the tribal drums begin, you know you're on your way to a whole new gaming experience. A suitably savage opening, full of vibrant colors and imagery, gives way to revealing the task at hand; this is the first *caveman simulation*! No, don't turn the page just yet, ye of little faith; read on and find out why this gets an unequivocal Hambleton recommendation...

First you choose your knuckle-dragger (either male or female), then walk, run and leap about a prehistoric landscape on a desperate mission to evolve! This hyper-cool idea leads to a weird and wonderful romp around a detailed (not to mention almost limitless) 3D landscape. There's trees! And flowers! And monkeys! And mind-altering effects! Then you'll find your cave-person's statistics; how fast they'll run, attack, breath underwater and even think; all of which you'll need to survive... and multiply!

You'll wander to northern tundra, search through caverns, drag yourself through sweltering deserts and sleep at the most inopportune moments, all in the name of tribe progression. Of course, as you wander, without any clue at all why you're here, you'll run into all kinds of fruit, rocks and various flora and fauna... all of which can be eaten. That's right. This adventure may be about exploration and bludgeoning innocent monkeys to death, but also

R REVIEW | PlayStation

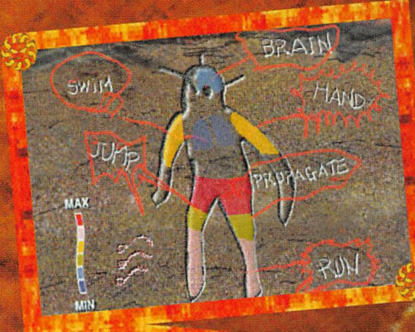
DEVELOPER - ART DINK	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - N/A
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - APRIL



CHIEF HAMBLETON
UGH! ME HAVE BIG POINTY STICK!







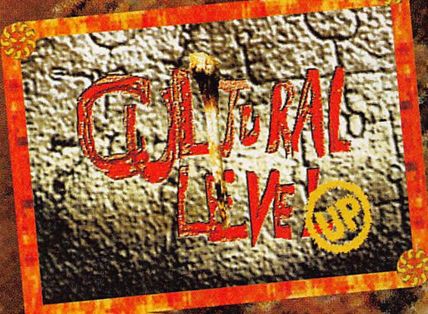




about filling your rapidly expanding stomach with all kinds of tasty/poisonous plants and berries (don't try this at home, kids!).

So, you'll spend an hour or seven (time simply flies when you play this!) simply jogging around your world, curious at the pretty lights in the sky, weird-colored animals and strange bursts of techno music when you enter different zones, and then you'll plunge into the sea and drown. Ooops. But no matter, because there's a virtually limitless supply of mutated offspring (some much more scary than others) to take your initial wanderer's place. So, you'll magically be transported back to your village, another Cave-person will descend from the sky, and another exploration begins.





After this has gone on, you'll begin to become more adept at killing, finding spears, tackling the bigger beasties in the game (Purple texture-mapped hippos? "Ha! Me have big pointy stick!" SPLITCH!!) and search for mammoths. And then the dawn of realization will hit you: You're on a quest for mammoth bones! And not just a couple of tusks, mind; but a huge tower of bones stretching from the village square up to the sun itself! Aha! *Tail of the Sun*!! Yes, it's all beginning to fit together now...





Yes, there's angular polygon monsters and some limited polygon pop-up in the horizon, but the sheer peacefulness and strangeness of this title had me hooked for days at a time. There's simply so much to explore as your tribe becomes more and more proficient, that you'll go from a skeptic to a full-fledged *Tail of the Sun* fanatic like me, constantly on the look-out and actually living the *Wild, Pure, Simple Life*. Novel, in-depth, very relaxing and fun; the best caveman simulation ever!! Just don't become too attached to your caveman, okay? Well done to Sony for giving this the US release it deserves and who knows, perhaps *Parappa and Rapper* could be next...

CH









MECHWARRIOR 2

31ST CENTURY COMBAT

THE PC SMASH MAKES A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO THE PLAYSTATION!











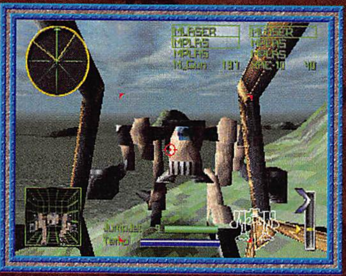
I was curious as to how Activision was going to convert *MechWarrior 2* to the home platforms. In its original PC form it was a complex action/strategy simulator with the emphasis placed firmly on strategy. Would the PS version retain the same deep, tactical gameplay? Well, in a word, no.

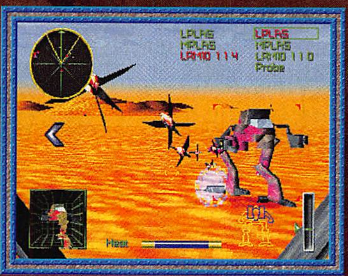
In order to cater to the 'shallow' console market, Activision has re-jigged the MechWarrior formula and switched the emphasis from strategy to action. The controls have been simplified (a necessity given PC *MW2*'s reliance on keyboard commands) and the pace has been upped, with more enemy mechs per mission and the addition of arcade style power-ups like Stealth, Speed and Invincibility to give the game a more traditional shoot-'em-up feel. Has this shift in balance worked? Well, kind of...



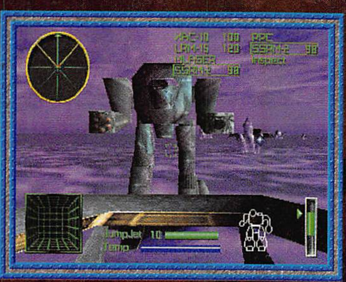
As with the PC original your objective in *MW2* is to rise up through the ranks of your chosen clan by successfully completing the missions in your campaign. There are 48 missions in total, evenly split between the two clans (Wolf and Falcon), with 16 all new missions exclusive to the home consoles. All the PC missions have been modified to include more action and destruction than their PC counterparts, while the console exclusive missions feature some nice twists on the usual *MW2* objectives.

Before you enter battle you get to choose from a wide range of mechs (all taken from the BattleMech universe), each balanced in terms of physical attributes and









R REVIEW

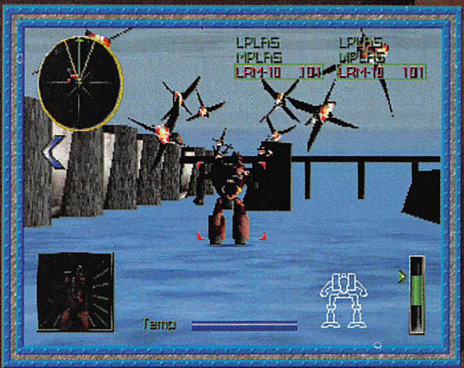
PlayStation

DEVELOPER - QUANTUM FACT.	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2 W/LINK
PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY '97



KNIGHTMARE
MECHWARRIOR, ARCADE STYLE!





weapons, and you'll find that certain Mechs are more effective on particular missions than others. While selecting your Mech, you also get to choose which weapons you want to group together to fire simultaneously, although the more power you lump into one blast, the quicker your mech overheats.

Technically, Activision has done a good job of replicating the PC's aesthetics. The graphics are ok—nothing special, but not too bad either. Even though the mechs are pretty basic in terms of number of polygons, their actual design is cool, and the lighting effects are a nice bonus. Just don't expect your PS to replicate the crisp hi-res visuals of the PC. Be content with a decent frame rate! A mention must also go to the new sound effects and music, which are excellent, and really contribute to the overall experience.

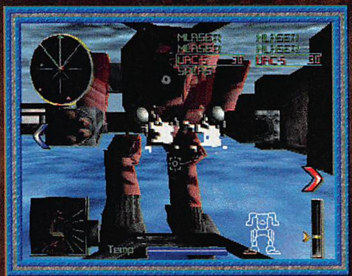
The control system actually translates surprisingly well to the PS pad, with every button employed for a particular function. It's been simplified from the PC mouse/keyboard set up, but the feel of piloting a huge war machine remains intact. Just like the PC, your mech can't strafe or make quick maneuvers—dodging is impossible—and ultimately it's more like a simulation than an action game. Despite Activision's intention of making *MW2* more action orientated, you still can't treat the game as a straightforward blaster. Just wading in with all guns blazing is a sure-fire way to get your ass kicked pronto. You need to approach each arena strategically, making sure you keep geographic superiority at all times and picking off foes from a distance.

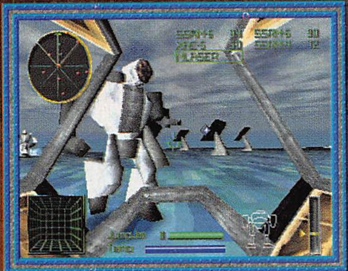


FORGET THE STRATEGY! BLAST ENEMY MECHS APART IN FULL-BLOWN FUTURE WAR!

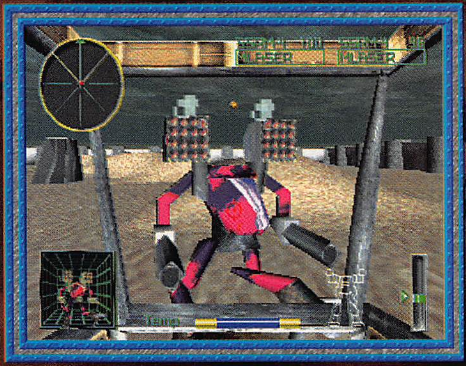
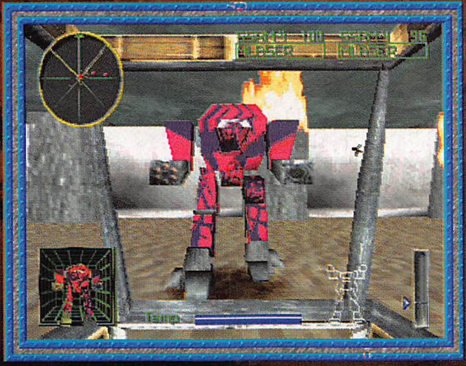
And that's *MW2*'s main problem. It doesn't know whether it wants to be an arcade-style shooter or a simulation. There is a lot of action, but because of the limited 'simulation' style control of your mech, the pace is fairly slow, and ultimately it all gets a bit repetitive. The different mission scenarios go some way towards spicing things up a little, but no matter what your mission objective, it always comes to down to the same old thing: shooting mechs.

I hope that doesn't all sound too negative. I had a lot of fun with *MW2* and if you're a fan of the genre, so will you. It's a good conversion and certainly the best of its kind currently available for the PS (way better than *Krazy Ivan*). It's not perfect, not by a long shot, but if you're willing to put up with a few basic flaws you'll discover a sophisticated and engaging mech sim that should more than satisfy any PS owners hungry for mech combat. *K*



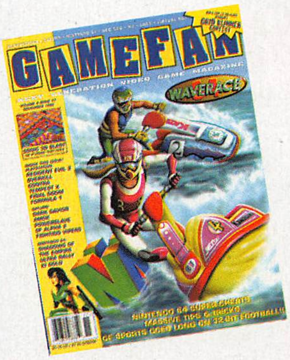



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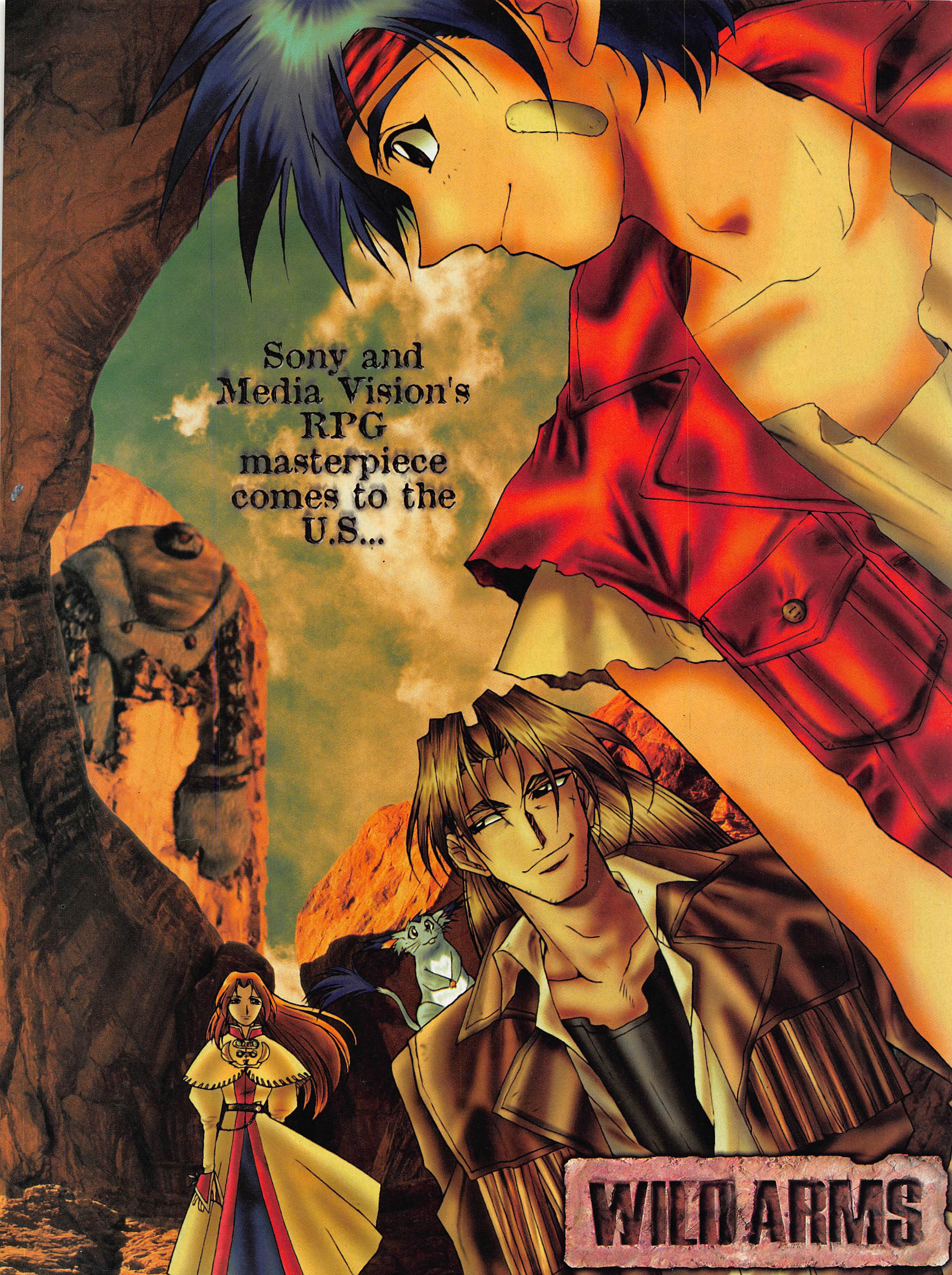
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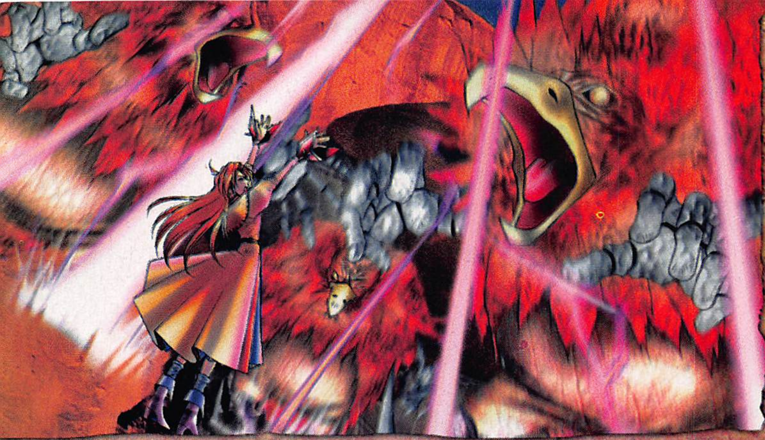
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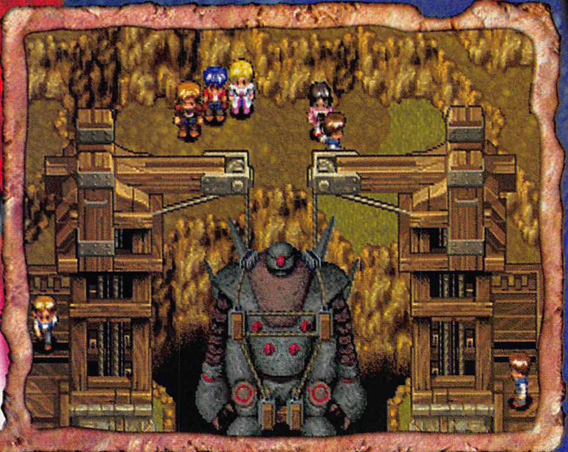
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AVKGF


Sony and
Media Vision's
RPG
masterpiece
comes to the
U.S...
WILD ARMS









It's finally beginning to look like the American video game market understands RPGs, thanks in no small part to Sony. Look at the PlayStation's track record: The US has only missed two major RPGs, *Arc the Lad I* and *II*, (Wait, make that three; we missed *Popolocrois*. But trust me, you didn't want it in the first place) that Japanese PlayStation owners got. Thankfully, Sony is continuing this newly established tradition (quite rapidly; the Japanese version of this game came out in late December!) with *Wild Arms*.

Wild Arms takes place in the land of Filgaia, a country with rich folklore describing a race of demons who were destroyed by an army of metal-skinned



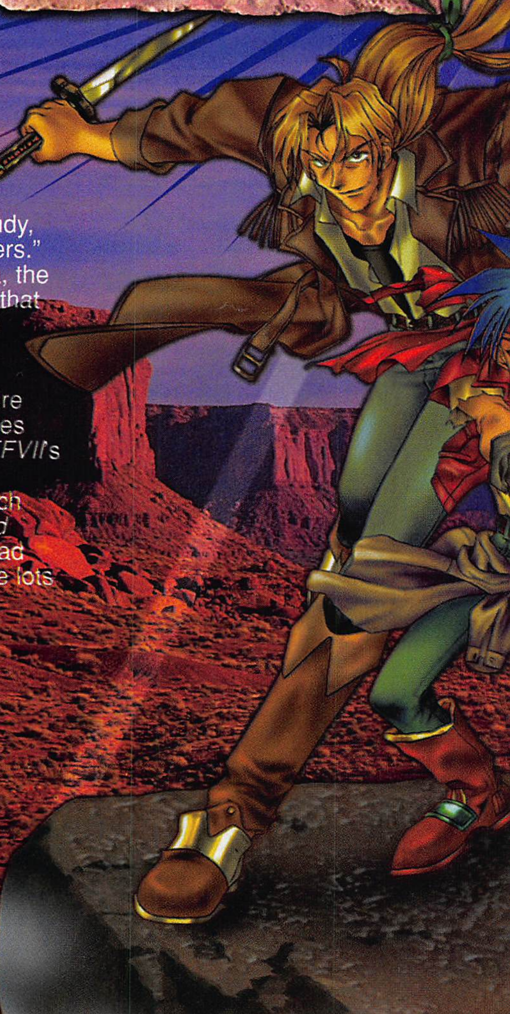






giants. Supposedly, these events took place over 1000 years ago. These tales were thought to be mere legends, until archaeological digs began to unearth incredibly advanced technology like giant mechanical golems and weapons known as ARMs, or Ancient Relic Machines. Several ARMs turn up, but only a tiny percentage of the population can synchronize with them. One of these people is the 15-year-old Rudy, one of the adventurers the people of Filgaia call "Dream Chasers." He, along with fellow adventurer, Jack Van Burace, and Cecilia, the mage-princess of Adlehyde, are about to embark on a journey that will change the face of their world and force them to learn truth about their personal histories they'd just as soon forget...

Wild Arms is highly derivative of past RPGs, but it borrows from all the right games—action RPG elements (like bombs, wire hooks and whatnot) from *Zelda*, puzzles from *Lufia II*, and battles from *Final Fantasy* (in fact, this combat system is so close to *FFVI*'s that it's scary... three party members, "limit" attacks, summon spells...). All this adds up to an extremely entertaining and much less sedate RPG engine than what we're used to. Playing *Wild Arms* is just, well, fun. You're not constricted to normal overhead RPG controls... You can dash, jump from high places, and have lots of merriment with all three characters' "Goods."











Wild Arms Krazy Korner

Wild Arms is an amazingly great game and all, but it contains one feature that just... well, *disturbs* me. If you can't tell what's happening below, our intrepid hero Rudy chucks a chicken, which, er, pops as soon as it hits the ground. What's left behind? A **MUSHROOM.** Does that not frighten you? We can't teach our children to go around hurling fowl just to gain shiny psychedelic treats! Protest! Start a letter-writing campaign! Notify your senator!









Ah yes, the "Goods" system. As has been said before in the pages of GameFan, every modern Japanese RPG has to have a few "new systems," which have gotten rather twisted of late ("Tri-Mode No Interruption Free Roam System!!" "Zapping Active Battle Exchange System!!," etc., etc...). With flagrant disregard for Japanese RPG naming rules, *Wild Arms* plays it simple with the "Goods System." In concept, however, it is anything but: Each character gains four items unique to them that can be used at any time. For instance, Rudy has bombs, a roller dash, and the Treasure Call, which allows you to see hidden treasures in towns and such... Needless to say, an item I very much desire in other RPGs! Jack has a lighter, a wire hook and his pet wind rat Hanpan, who can retrieve items or push switches that are beyond crevices. Cecilia has the Tear, which can open specially sealed passages, a watch that can turn back time and a wand that allows her to communicate with animals.



ARMS



The polygonal battles are truly a sight to behold, with beautiful spells and summoned beasts. And they're highly strategic, as well. Unfortunately, once you've experienced *Final Fantasy VII*'s battles, *Wild Arms*' look... uh... No, I can't candy-coat this: They look less than spectacular. I must commend Sony for bringing *Wild Arms* out before *FFVII*—I was quite impressed with the Japanese *Wild Arms*, but this American preview was hard to do after finishing *FFVII*. Ignore that, though. Most of you won't see *FFVII* for a few months after *Wild Arms* comes out; rest assured that these battles are the greatest you've ever seen and will see until September 7th.

The American version of *Wild Arms* we received was decently translated, with few names changed. It was only playable for about three hours (most of the shots in this layout, unfortunately, are from the Japanese version) so expect a much more in-depth look at *WA* next issue, perhaps with a review of the final American game. From playing the Japanese original, I can already tell you that *Wild Arms* will be one of the best RPGs ever released in this country, and will fill in the time between *Suikoden* and *FFVII* perfectly. - ***NR***









PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - MEDIA VISION
PUBLISHER - SCEA
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - APRIL



NICK ROX
IT'S ALL ABOUT HANPAN!!



CORE WANTS TO INVADE YOUR DREAMS!







GameFan first made the public aware of Core's *Swagman* way back in Volume 3, Issue 3. Yes, that was quite a while ago, but the game is finally nearing completion. And even though many moons have passed, the graphic prowess of this title still cannot be overlooked.

In Swagman, you take control of Zack or Hannah in their quest to defeat the vile Swagman and rescue Dream Fly, protector of the happy dreams. Travel through seventeen stages of rendered scenery swapping characters and doing your best to make it through unscathed. The game really starts to get interesting once you reach the DreamWorld. Here, your characters transform into DreamBeasts and take on a whole new set of powers.

This being a preview, I won't go too in-depth into the actual play mechanics. What I saw looked fairly basic, but was well done. You have the ability to jump, pick up items, swing your flashlight, etc. You're character doesn't zoom around on screen, but it does control well. So I have faith in Core to deliver the gameplay goods. They've generally kept me quite pleased in the past, so I can only hope for the same here. At the very least however, I have seen how this game looks, and it's very impressive.



HANNA



ZACK







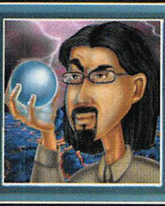




P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CORE	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - EIDOS	DIFFICULTY - N/A
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - 2ND QUARTER '97



SUBSTANCE D
The Swagman cometh!

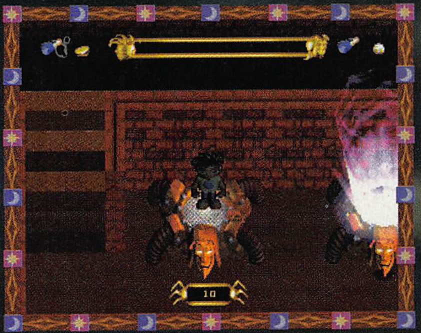





Graphically, the look is stellar. Take the shadows, for instance. They actually move with your character and flow over objects based on the position of the light source. Add to this, mega animation, color, and effects and you have a fine looking game on your hands.

Hopefully Core will imbue this title with gameplay to match its outstanding visuals. It certainly looks original and the cool dream premise reminds me of that other surreal masterpiece, Sonic Team's *NiGHTS*. Core certainly has a fine track record thus far, and they've been working on *Swagman* for a long time. Let's hope they spent that time wisely. If so, look for a glowing review as soon as a final version is available. ***SD***











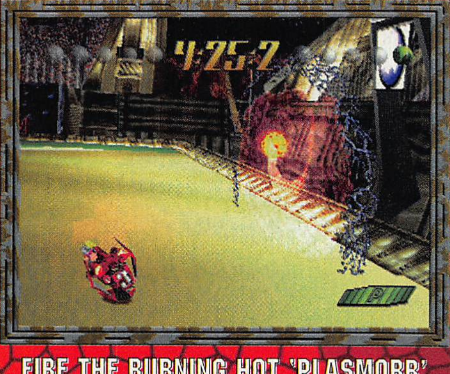





BALL BLAZER CHAMPIONS







FIRE THE BURNING HOT 'PLASMORB' INTO THE GOAL! IT'S GOOD!!!!



P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - FACTOR 5
PUBLISHER - LUCASARTS
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1 OR 2
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - 2ND QTR 1997



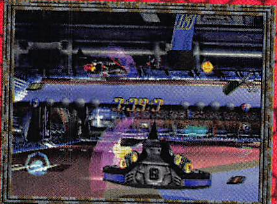
GLITCH
Another cool classic getting a 32-bit face lift!

Back in 1985, LucasFilm Games introduced the original *BallBlazer*. Developed for the Atari and Commodore platforms, *BallBlazer* was one of the most advanced games of its time. Just imagine: It's 1985, you're coming off years of intense 4k gaming (I was, anyway, in my little ColecoVision universe), and a futuristic first-person blaster comes along out of nowhere. Players toiled over the ultra-fast-paced 3D experience, vying to attain the coveted rank of 'Master Blazer.' Now, LucasArts hopes to re-capture the breakthrough classic, with the all-new *BallBlazer Champions* for the PS.

Champions takes place on an artificial asteroid created expressly for the Interstellar BallBlazer Championship. The IBC brings in competitors from across the galaxy—pilots who command powerful hovercraft-like vehicles called "Rotofoils." The IBC committee made

SPLIT-SCREEN MODE FOR TWO PLAYERS!







certain the object of the game was simple: Score more goals than your opponent. Friendly sportsmanship? Not so. The BallBlazer universe is perpetually at war, and this tournament replaces the bloodshed with sport over two weeks, every year. Why do they continue to fight? Nobody knows. The network executives need it, the fans love it, and the historians watch on helplessly.

So how do you play? You choose one of 8 champions, customize your Rotofoil, and enter the competition. The ball in this game is the "plasmorb," and Rotofoil energy is required when holding it, when shooting, and when performing various maneuvers (such as the "plasmorb steal" and special dodges). You're in a giant 3D stadium each time you fight, so learning the layout and practicing your maneuvers is essential.

We haven't had a chance to sit down and take this game apart yet, but more in-depth gameplay information should be coming soon. If everything comes together, *BallBlazer Champions* should be a heck of a comeback classic. *G*

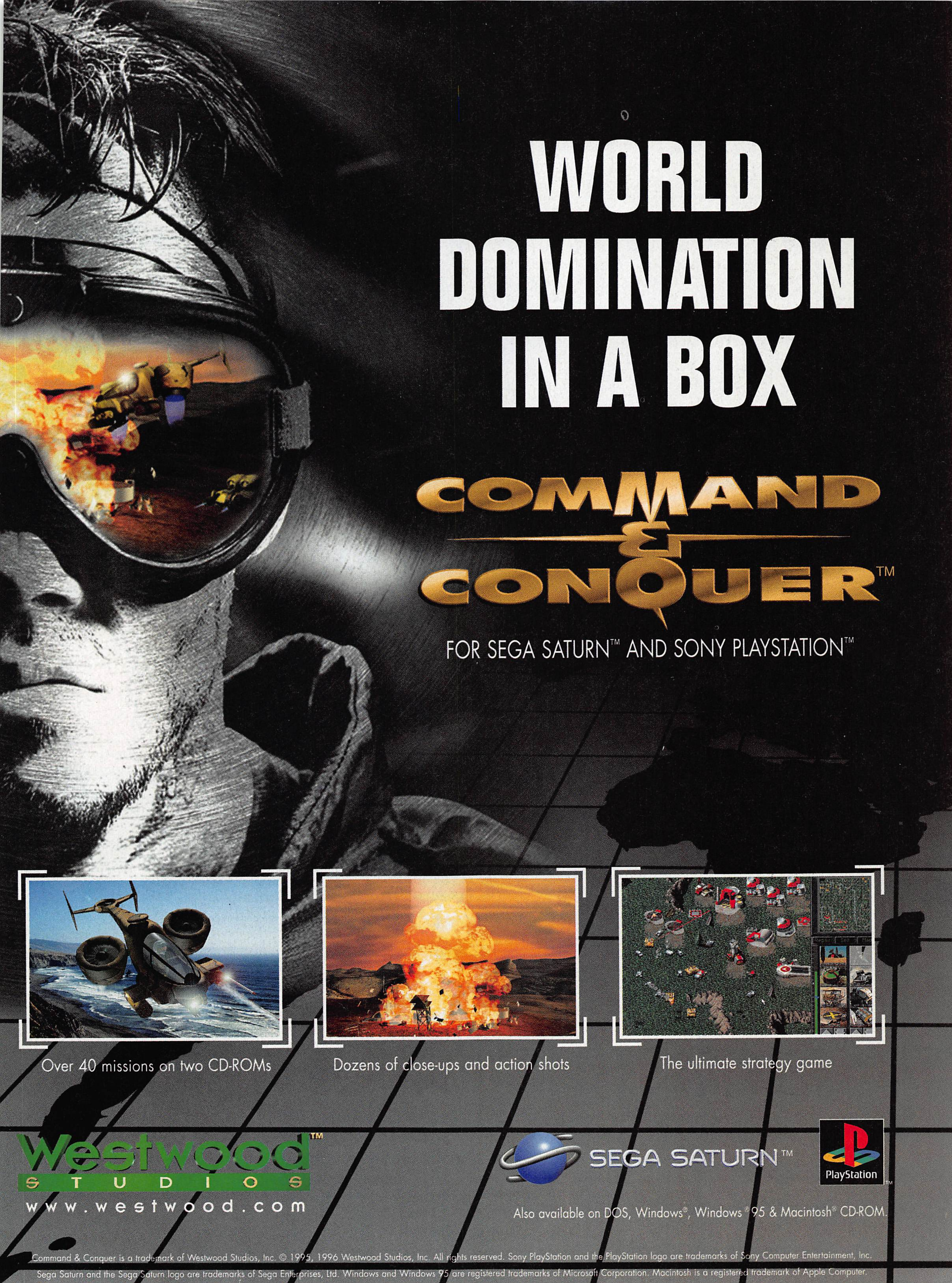






EIGHT ALIEN CHAMPIONS VIE FOR THE TITLE OF MASTER BLAZER!!



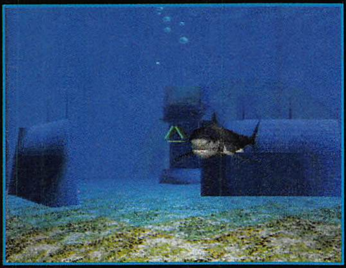


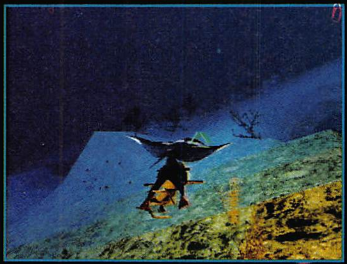
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EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!:
BLACK-OP'S UNDERWATER EXTRAVAGANZA: TREASURES OF THE DEEP!

In Treasures of the Deep you play the part of Jack Runyan, and ex-Navy Seal turned rogue mercenary who travels the globe on a never-ending search for undersea fortunes. By retrieving treasures you can make money to upgrade your vehicle with new weapons and equipment, which you will need in future operations to stop terrorist Simon Black from detonating the world's undersea fault lines. Your quest will take you to locations like the Bermuda Triangle, the undersea caves of the Yucatan Peninsula, the Marianas Trench, the icy caverns of Antarctica and the shark-infested waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Cool.

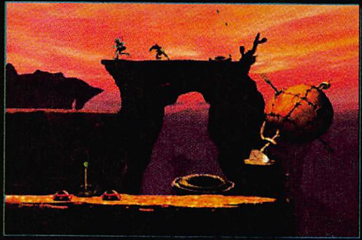








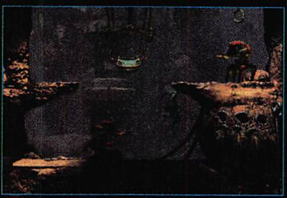

ABES ADVENTURE • ODD WORLD INHABITANTS/GTE • ADVENTURE




One of the most unique, and graphically superb adventures perhaps ever, is Odd World Inhabitants' ambitious Abes Adventure. The game goes as far as having its own language called "Game Speak," has generous parallax and some truly comical overtones. It's deep as well; real deep. With any luck we'll have the game in our hands for a preview next month.









HEAVEN'S GATE • ATLUS • FIGHTING • AVAIL. NOW JPN./US TBA








Atlus enters the 3D fighting fray with *Heaven's Gate*, an original fighter which introduces 8 all-new characters. Apart from the typical assortment of options (rounds, life gauge, etc.), *HG* also allows one to alternate the ring-out feature on or off, and includes training and survival (or "Tough Guy") modes. The gameplay is ultra *Virtua Fighter*-esque, including PPKs, a block button, and two-button throws (as well as similar characters). Despite the borrowed themes, *Heaven's Gate* offers great 30 fps action within highly-detailed 3D arenas and backgrounds, as well as a soundtrack well suited to the Oriental feel. *HG* has yet to be announced for a US release, but it seems inevitable... either way, we'll keep you posted.





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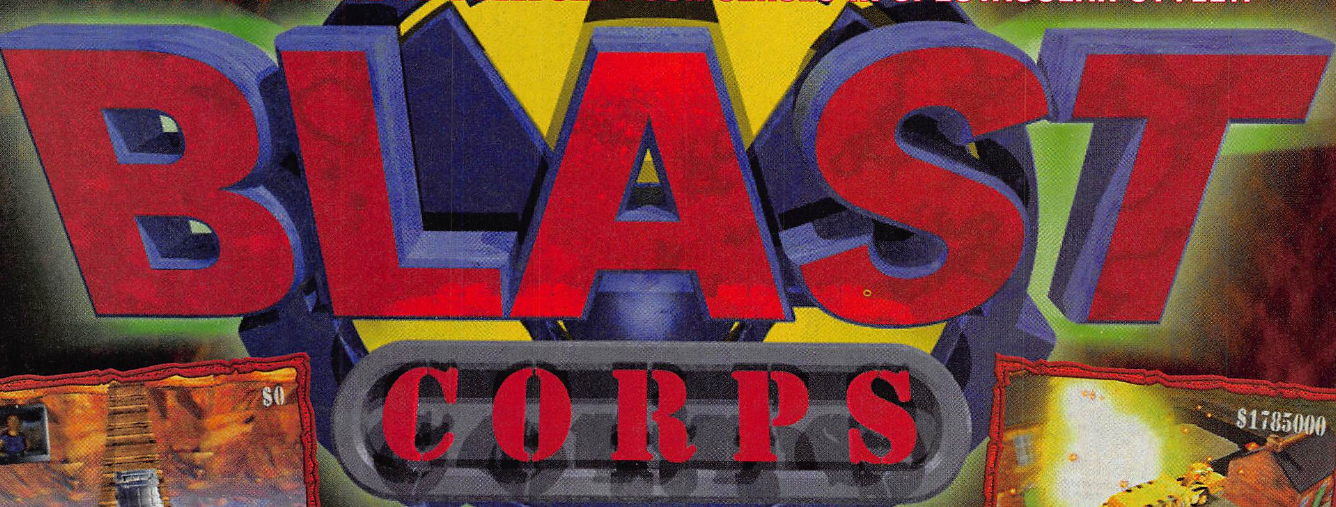








RARE IS PREPARING TO BULLDOZE YOUR SENSES IN SPECTACULAR STYLE!!







In the 21st century, a computer-controlled chemical carrier has malfunctioned and headed off course into a populated area. The chemicals being transported are highly unstable, and should the carrier collide with any obstacles, it will explode with the force of a small nuclear weapon. And that would be bad. As a member of the titular Blast Corps—a crack team of demolition experts—it's your job to ensure that the carrier gets a smooth ride through each of the game's 60+ levels...by whatever means necessary.

Each level contains a set number of vehicles dotted around the landscape (from a total of around 50) and you must use these vehicles appropriately to clear a safe path for the carrier. There are eight main demolition vehicles (each with a different technique for destroying buildings) and around 50 more 'assisting' vehicles, each with their own utilitarian function. For instance, freight trains and cranes can be used to transport other vehicles to inaccessible areas, while cars and vans are often the fastest way to get from point A to point B. There's even the *A-Team* van in there somewhere!

Blast Corps is structured around three main global 'stages,' each containing a set number of levels that must be completed before you can progress to the next stage. There are around 60 levels in total (includ-

ROBOTS CAN SMASH CONCRETE WITH EASE! THREE TOUGH DROIDS TO CHOOSE FROM!











POWERSLIDE THE DUMP TRUCK FOR GREATER DAMAGE! THIS VEHICLE IS TOUGH GOING!

ing a vast number of secret and bonus levels) and the further you get into the game, the more complex your task becomes. Not only do you have to destroy buildings but you have to fill in holes, bridge rivers, transport TNT crates to demolish particularly stubborn structures, and all the while the carrier is closing in.





NEW TACTICS ARE REQUIRED TO SUCCEED WITH THE DUNE BUGGY!

However, clearing a path for the chemical carrier isn't the only mission in *Blast Corps*. Once a level has been successfully completed you can return to it at any time to attempt one of the secondary objectives. Destroy buildings to earn extra money, or search the landscape for hidden vehicles, Radiation Dispersal Units (which open sub-levels) and six hidden scientists who unlock a secret that's 'out of this world.' These secrets add an extra layer of depth to the game and keep you playing long past the point of completion.

The graphics are impressive, as you would expect from Rare. The objects themselves aren't that exceptional (the pastel colors seem a bit out of place) but the explosions are cool, the vehicles move realistically and the whole landscape is convincingly portrayed with little slow-down and no clipping. You couldn't do this on any other system. The sound effects are also appropriate enough, while the music is a strange mixture of '70s funk, ambient and barn trance!



But on to the million dollar question: How does the game actually play? Well, I think opinions are going to vary over this one folks, but personally, I really enjoyed *Blast Corps*. I admit a few of the vehicles are way too difficult to control (such as the Back Lash), and the gameplay is fraught with frustration, but overall, I got a real kick out of the whole mass destruction thing. Sure it has its problems, but when it comes down to it, you can't beat a good bit of industrial vandalism once in a while.

Blast Corps is definitely not for everyone. If you're looking for instant gratification in a game, you won't find it here. But if you're looking for something a little different, then *Blast Corps*' unique blend of action, destruction and puzzles may well be just what the doctor ordered. I would say that *Blast Corps* has all the indications of being a sleeper hit, except that every N64 game released here these days is a guaranteed chart topper (*Cruis'n USA* was complete poo and that's still on the charts!). I guess when you're starving, anything tastes good. **K**

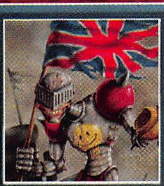
SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE VEHICLES TO CONTINUE THE CARNAGE! IT'S A BLAST!!



UPDATE

NINTENDO64

DEVELOPER - RARE	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - NINTENDO	DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - APRIL



KNIGHTMARE
An original game is a RARE thing indeed.



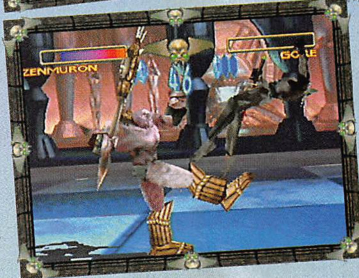






DARK RIFT



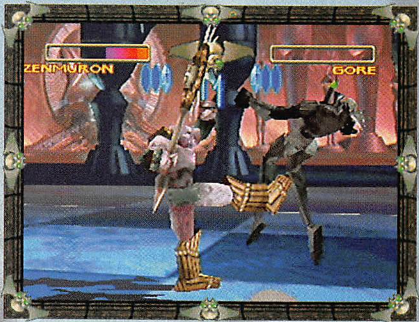




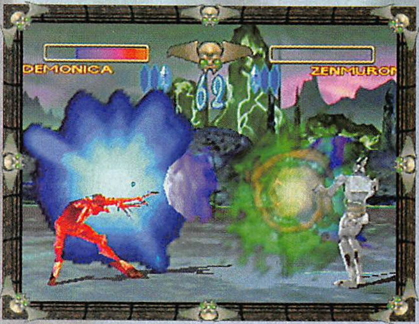
If there's one genre the N64 isn't exactly known for, it's 3D fighting games. (Actually, are there any genres it *is* known for...?) Besides Hudson's *Dual Heroes*, which hasn't even been announced for an American release, there's nothing. Enter Vic Tokai's *Dark Rift*, a game that was originally announced for the PlayStation but was scrapped due to... shall we say... *differences* with Sony over a lovely little game called *Criticom*.

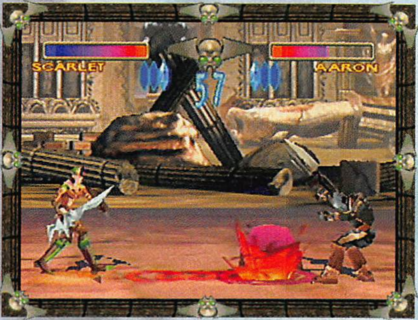
Though we haven't actually seen the N64 version in motion (at last year's E3 we saw the game running on a PlayStation at 60fps, with motion blurs and multi-layer parallax backgrounds... it was gorgeous, to say the least,) Vic Tokai boasts that it will bestow upon us "blazing frame rates, optical motion capture animation and intense fog mood enhancing." Let's hope that the fog in Dark Rift is more, uh, mood enhancing than in other N64 games...

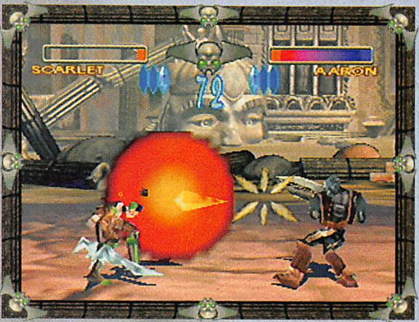
Dark Rift features eight playable characters, two bosses, *Tekken*-like ten-hit combos, side-steps, chain combos, and *KI*-style combo breakers. Little else, such as specifics about what type of special move motions are in the game, is known. We should have a hands-on preview of *Dark Rift* sometime soon. ***NR***

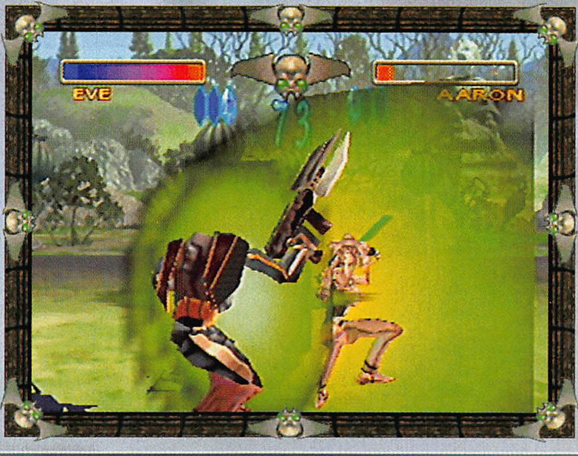


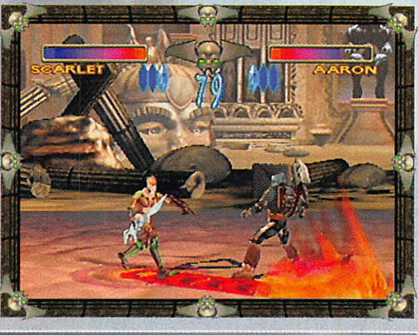












PREVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - KRONOS

PUBLISHER - VIC TOKAI

FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

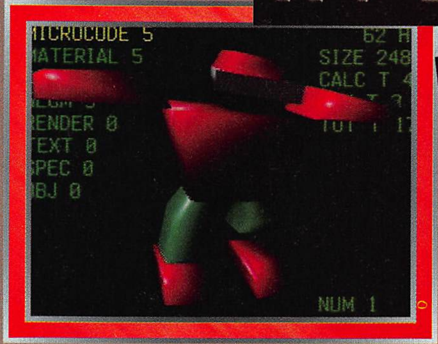
OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - N/A



NICK ROX From the makers of *criticom!!* jeeyah!

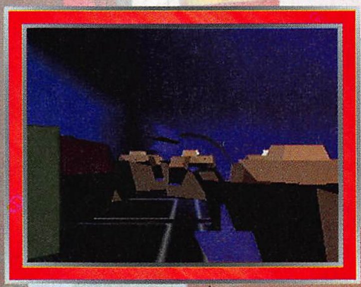
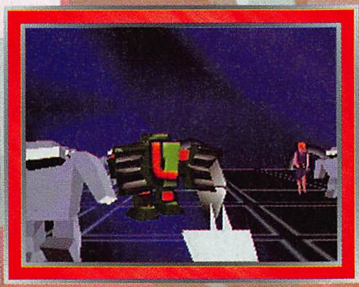
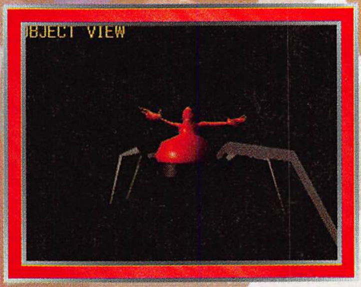
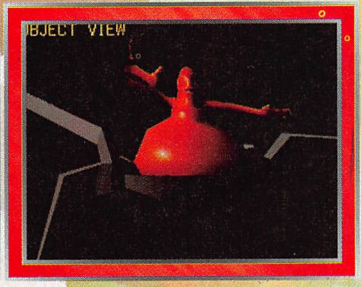


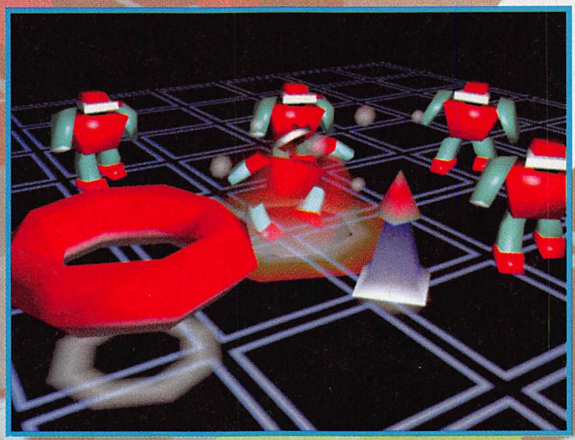




ROBOTRON X

Robotron X for the Nintendo 64 is well under way by the same team that brought us the stellar PS version; Player One. We recently made our way to sunny Santa-Monica to see what gamers could excpect from this classic blaster on the most powerful console in the known universe. As of 2/24 the game was about 70% complete with all of the graphics and model designs finished, but yet to be placed into the actual game. The N64 version will feature 200 levels, like the PS version, but, according to designer George Weising, it will feature a few things not found on the PS version as well. These "extras" include a first-person perspective mode, improved enemy AI, dual-analog controller mode (see picture, below), music which increasingly accelerates toward the end of each level, and best of all, the final level features a yet unseen end boss! The fourteen techno tracks (completely recomposed from the PS game) use 6-8 sound channels, and at this point, it's already the best we've heard from the N64. As expected, the player's level status, controller configurations and option settings can all be saved to memory card. A jolt pack option may be added also, if the specs are recieved in time. If all goes well, we should be obtaining a preview copy of *Robotron X* for the next issue, as well as an interview with Player One, where we just may learn what they've got in the works following this amazing title. The Enquirer




Pictured above: Left, a demonstration of the two-handed technique; Center, a demo shot of *Robotron X*; Right,a sample of rendered art, which may be used as the cover for the packaging.

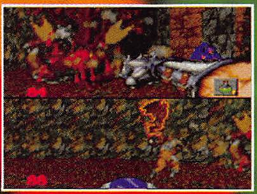













TITLE	HEXEN
COMPANY	GT INTERACTIVE
ETA	MAR. JPN. - JUNE US
GENRE	3D-CORRIDOR

Hexen, due in June (USA), is the 1st corridor game to feature 2 or 4 player multi-screen carnage. The game is also a lot cleaner graphically than its PS and SS counterparts. We should have a *bona fide* hands on preview for you next month. This great corridor game will be a welcome sight indeed.






TITLE	GOEMON 5
COMPANY	KONAMI
ETA	MAY-JPN. - 4TH Q. US
GENRE	ACTION/PLATFORM/ADV.

Finally, some actual screens (as opposed to the mock ups we've been getting) of *Goemon 5*. The engine looks very "It's-a-me!" but the gameplay should be quite unique. Look for a more platform-oriented adventure. *G5* is due in Japan this May, with a US version probably around Christmas.

TITLE	ZELDA 64
COMPANY	NINTENDO
ETA	SUMMER-JPN.
GENRE	ACTION/RPG



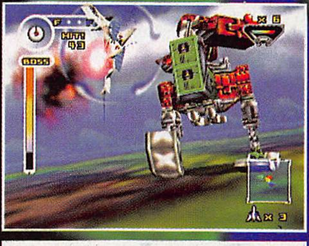
The latest on *Zelda* is news that the game will now be introduced in cart form (124m) and then new scenarios will be introduced which will attach to the quest via 64DD. Look for *Zelda 64* this Summer in Japan and later this year in the USA.





STARFOX 64











The next big event for the N64 is definitely *StarFox 64*. If the Nintendo 64's 3D capabilities are to be tested, this will be the ultimate testing ground. The game features "me-to" levels similar to the original along with "go anywhere" levels where you and the crew fight free of directional restraints. *StarFox 64* also features split-screen play for up to 4 players in battle mode and ground assaults. The game is 96 megs big and blessed by Miyamoto and his crack squad of designers and artists. *Starfox* lands in Japan this April and here this June.



TITLE	STARFOX 64
COMPANY	NINTENDO
ETA	APRIL JPN. - JUNE US
GENRE	SHOOTER




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BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN
English Language Dialogue
BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN
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One year ago, the battle between Master Swordsman Eiji Shinjo and the infamous Gaia was interrupted by agents of "The Organization." Now, the ultimate battle between the greatest fighters in the world will finally be decided.
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Lunacy

I can't tell you what a delight it is to see a game like this reach the shores of the red, white, and blue. It's almost as if an evil conspiracy has been bent on keeping the more esoteric and interesting Japanese games from our waiting hands. Somehow, Lunacy made it.

Some of you may recall seeing the Japanese version of this game (called Torico) a little while ago in the pages of GameFan. In the interim, the game has received a shiny new English voice track, allowing the game to be enjoyed by all English speaking humans of the world.

You play Fred, a poor soul who's memory was lost four years ago. Since then, you have been wandering from village to village searching for your true identity, along with the meaning of the strange crescent tattoo on your forehead. As Lunacy opens, you find yourself in a mysterious village known as Misty Town. You quickly discover that the only way you can leave Misty Town and regain your memory is by finding the ethereal City of Moons. So Lunacy begins.

In the tradition of Warp's inspired D, Lunacy is all streamed FMV. In other words, you move around within the game world in spurts from one "hot" spot to the next. Of course, a level of control is removed from the player's hands, but the upshot of it is a beautifully realized and detailed environment—much more so than would be possible if it were all real time. Everything in life is a compromise of sorts, I suppose. But I can live with that, for the look and atmosphere of this game is just wonderful. Misty Town is lit in a melancholy dusk, the setting sun painting everything orange. The game is even more breathtaking once you reach the City of Moons. Here the color palette is cool, with great, dreamlike bridges and pools of water. Even with the Saturn's lack of prowess with FMV (which is surprisingly well handled here), the game looks fantastic.

As far as the gameplay is concerned, there is less puzzle solving than D. It's mostly about finding items and then finding the proper place to use them. There's nothing terrible tricky or vexing, it's simply a matter of looking everywhere and speaking to everyone. Certain items won't appear unless a particular conversation has been triggered. This may stump you a couple of times.

In the music department, Lunacy benefits from a beautiful, delicately composed soundtrack. As much as the actual look of the game, the music soaks the environment in atmosphere. It's a really great sounding score that suits the mood of the game perfectly. As for the dubbing, the voice quality is fine, though the translation and readings are a bit odd at times. Revel in phrases like, "This town is a nut farm. I'm getting the hell out of here," or, "The name that they call me is Fred."

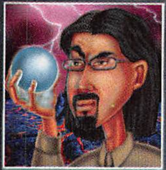
If you thought D was the bee's knees, Lunacy is right up your alley. The FMV is supremely well done, the music's gorgeous and the story is nice and surreal. On the other hand, you may not like FMV games, and if that's the case, you'll probably won't change your mind on Lunacy's behalf. Certainly it's not the kind of game you can play over and over. ***SD***





R REVIEW | SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA OF JAPAN	# OF PLAYERS - 1 PLAYER
PUBLISHER - ATLUS	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - 2 CDs	AVAILABLE - NOW

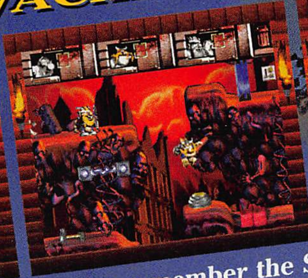


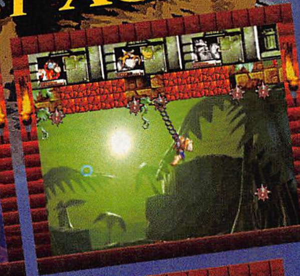
SUBSTANCE D
THE NAME THAT THEY CALL ME IS FRED.



Norse By Norse West

Those Wacked-Out Vikings Are Lost Again!!

I'm sure some or a lot of you remember the SNES and Genesis platform/puzzle game *Lost Vikings*. We're into the post-16-bit era now, and Interplay has seen fit to update one of their more popular titles into the 32-bit realm, with *Norse By Norsewest*. In case you've forgotten or never played the original, let me touch on the concept of the game. You alternate control between three little Vikings, each with differing skills and abilities. Erik can jump and dash, Olaf can shield, float, and shrink, and Baleog has weapons. So, by using the unique skills of the three Vikings, you must suss out some way to get them all to the level exit. Naturally, as you progress, the puzzles get more and more tricky to crack.



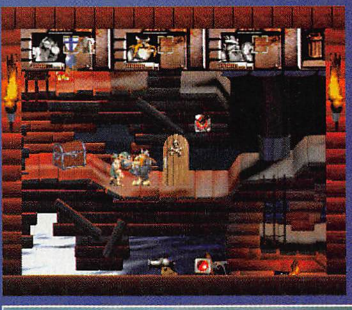



As would be expected, the graphics have been upgraded, though not as much as they could have been, considering the strength of the Saturn's 2-D abilities. Though the backgrounds are nicely colored and detailed, there is but one scroll. It would look so much better with some of the deep parallax I know the Saturn is capable of. To my eyes, it doesn't look all that much better than something like *Donkey Kong Country*, and that game had some pretty deep scrolling. But don't get the impression that I am at odds with this game. I'm merely pointing out that I feel the graphics could be of a little better quality, not that there's anything wrong with them. On the flip side, the aural sensations are sure to please. The music is nicely composed and fits the pacing of the game beautifully. Interplay has generally had a good history with game music, and *Norse by Norsewest* continues that tradition.

However, graphics aside, this game remains true to the original's formula, which means that it's addictive and fun. And, in an effort to add something new, there are now additional characters you get to control in certain levels. You still have three characters at your command, but one or more of the Vikings will be replaced by an animal player. There's the wolf, who has the ability to jump endlessly up walls and swipe at enemies, and the little dragon, who can fly for a short time (he gets tired, the poor little feller) and shoot fire.

If you liked the original *Lost Vikings*, you'll definitely get a kick out of this update, especially in two player co-op mode. The graphics won't blow you away and there isn't a whole lot new, but the puzzles will once again have you scratching your head. Anyone new to *Lost Vikings* will like this if they prefer to think rather than blast their way through a level. I say it's good fun.

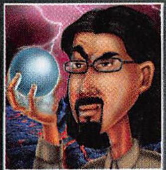
SD




R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - Silicon & Synapse	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - INTERPLAY	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - APRIL '97



SUBSTANCE D
WERNY, HERNY, BERNDY, SHNERNDY, MORK! MORK!

KONAMI'S CLASSIC HITS THE SATURN!

CONTRA legacy of war





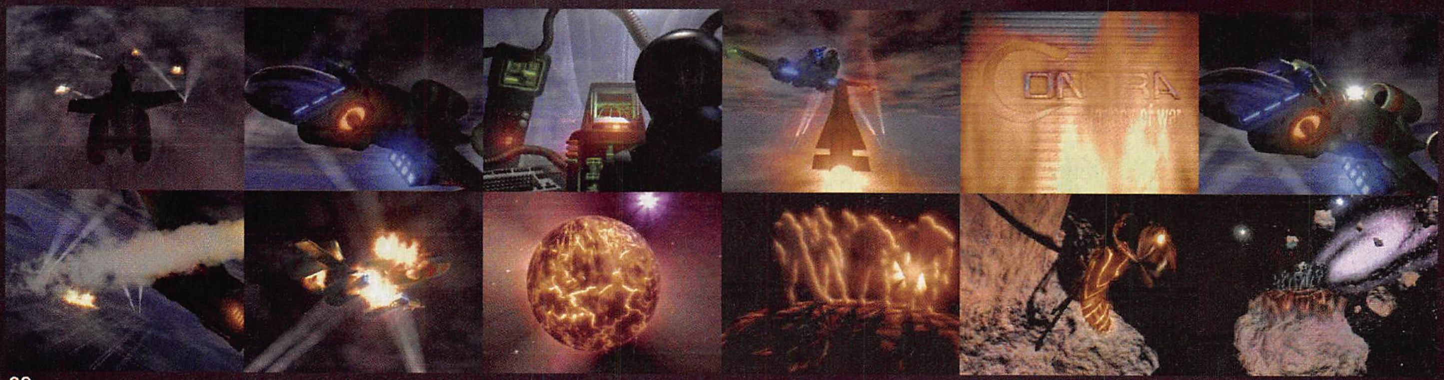
Some of my fondest gaming memories stem from my experience with the old NES *Contra*. Images of that game still flow freely throughout my synaptic pathways. We're a long way from 8-bit these days, and you would expect a 32-bit version of a classic NES side-scroller to be beyond awesome. By all rights, it should be. It would seem, however, that Konami dropped the ball on this one. If you were hoping for the classic *Contra* experience, be prepared to be a little disappointed.

Their first mistake in updating the classic *Contra* series was a fatal one. For some unfathomable reason, this game was not even developed in-house by Konami. It was instead farmed out to Appaloosa Software. Why such a hallmark of Konami's past would be put into the hands of someone else will forever evade my intellectual grasp. It just shouldn't be.



Some of you may have played the PlayStation version that preceded this one. This is essentially the same game. The frame rate is a bit smoother, but the textures are of lower quality. The fact that I am even speaking of textures is the first tip-off that something is not right here. *Contra*, and the style of play that it encompasses, was never meant to be in 3D. I appreciate progress and all, but if Konami wanted to make a 3D ground-based shooter, they should have done something original instead of tarnishing the *Contra* name.

Still, I could accept a 3D *Contra* if it was incredibly well done, but this game comes nowhere near incredibly well done. Perhaps most maddening is the atrocious collision detection. Something that should be intuitive and enjoyable,



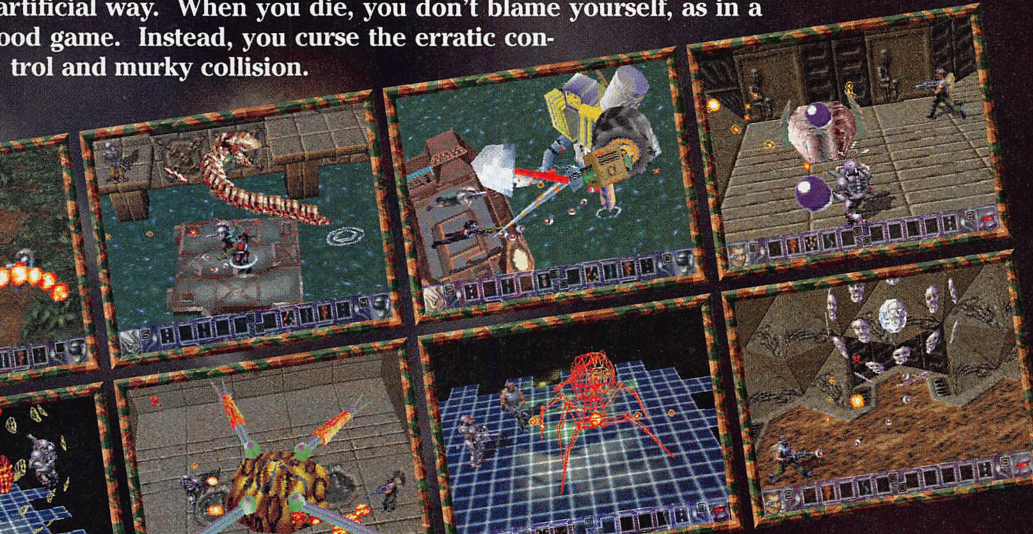
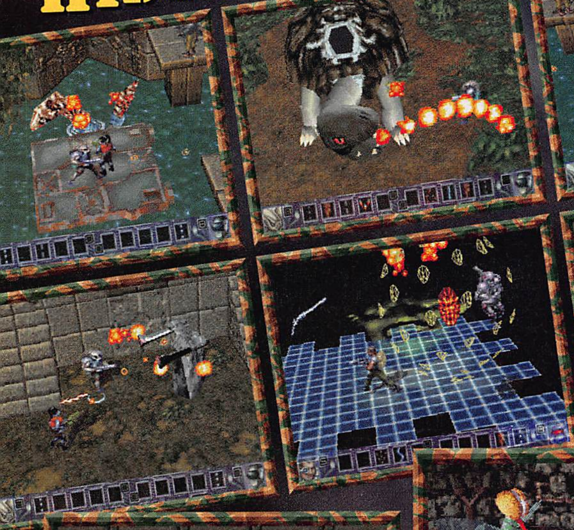





like jumping up to a platform, becomes an exercise in frustration. Couple the poor collision with the sloppy joe control and you're in for a hair-pulling, controller-throwing, "great" time. And speaking of bad control, something else that should be intuitive, like strafing, is handled in a way as to cause even more frustration. Instead of holding one of the shoulder buttons to strafe, you are required to click it once to activate it and click it again to deactivate it. With bullets coming at you from all angles, this is not fun. Playing the game should be the challenge, not wrestling with the control. And while I'm on the subject of challenge, I must point out the extreme difficulty of this game. The *Contra* series has always been about being hard, but this one is hard in an artificial way. When you die, you don't blame yourself, as in a good game. Instead, you curse the erratic control and murky collision.

Take a break at the arcade with a couple of

HIDDEN GAMES!





In addition, the characters you can choose from are lame and completely out of place in the *Contra* universe. They're more like characters from the European Probotector version. Even the character select screen is cheesy. Each character has a terrible looking, American-style animation that does nothing more than slow down your ability to scroll through and select your on-screen persona.

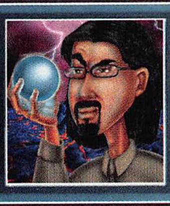
Surely there must be some things good about this game, you may say. Well, there are. The music's actually pretty good. Oh, and there are some decent boss encounters and a couple of cool little hidden games. Well, they aren't that hidden, but they are a nice diversion nonetheless.

I could see the reasoning behind doing a 3D version for PlayStation, as it is a Sony directive to work in 3D as much as possible. Of course, that's no excuse, but at least there's some kind of reasoning behind it, flawed though it may be. But on a 2D powerhouse such as the Sega Saturn, I can only dream of the lush, sprite filled, and intense shooting scroller Konami could've done. ***SD***

R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - APPALOOSA	# OF PLAYERS - CD
PUBLISHER - KONAMI	DIFFICULTY - HARD
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



SUBSTANCE D
Y' KNOW, IF YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING GOOD...

TWO-PLAYER BATTLE ACTION THROUGH A CAPTURED L.A. OFFICE TOWER! WELCOME TO THE PARTY, PAL!





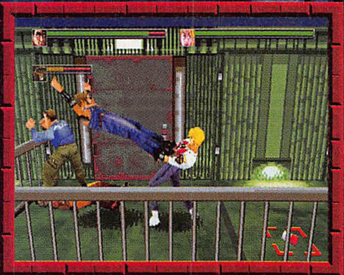
FIGHT UNIQUE VILLAINS THROUGH 5 STAGES WITH MULTIPLE LEVELS!





INCREDIBLE FIGHT TECHNIQUES—OVER 1,000 CHARACTER ANIMATIONS! 30 DIFFERENT ENEMIES!





While, for the most part, 32-bit technology has meant a marked improvement in most game genres, there is one type of game that seems to have resisted the advance: the side scrolling beat-'em-up. I'm a big fan of the genre (*Final Fight* and *Streets Of Rage 2* rule), and it pains me that I can count the number of decent PS and Saturn scrolling beat-'em-ups on one hand... with no fingers. It's a sad state of affairs when the 32-bit genre leader is the distinctly average *Batman Forever.*

DIE HARD Arcade



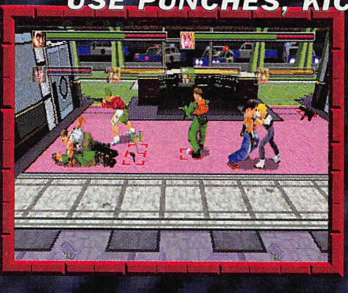
But wait! Hope is on the horizon (well, for Saturn owners at least). Sega has finally gotten around to releasing AM1's smash ST-V hit *Dynamite Deka* in the States, albeit under a new name: *Die Hard Arcade.* As with previous ST-V games, it's an arcade-perfect conversion (except for the CD loading), and as anyone who's played the coin-op will know, that's definitely good news.

So what makes *Die Hard Arcade* so special? Well, for one thing, it's 3D. Ok, so that's not that special, but I think it's a first for a beat-'em-up of this kind. Admittedly the polygon count per character isn't that high, but the environments are fully 3D, the textures are clean and there's never any slow-down, no matter how many enemies are on-screen (normally a lot). Because of the polygon visuals, AM1 has been able to include real-time cut scenes, and best of all, an interactive camera system that intelligently zooms and pans to frame the action. The overall aesthetic quality is highly impressive, and it really gives you the feeling that you're playing a 'grown up' beat-'em-up—sort of *Final Fight* meets *Virtua Fighter.*

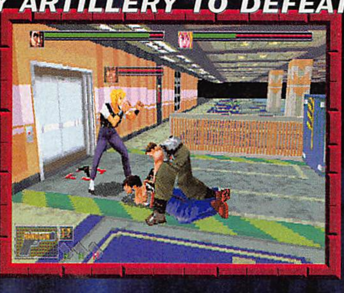
The VF connection isn't just limited to the graphics either. Some of *DHA*'s moves are taken directly from *VF* (e.g. Wolf's Giant Swing, Kage's uppercut) while the basic gameplay has a real *VF* feel. The recovery times and collision detection aren't as harsh as *VF*, but a lot of the moves are executed in a similar fashion—i.e., PPK-derivative combos as opposed to just furiously tapping the buttons.

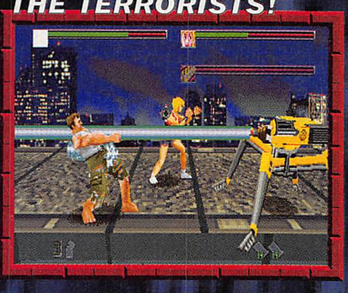
At first *Die Hard Arcade* seems almost unreasonably difficult, but as with most AM games, delve a bit deeper and you'll soon discover that there's more depth than meets the eye. There are combos to be learned, throws to be perfected and mastering the basic mechanics of combat is a real challenge.

USE PUNCHES, KICKS, THROWS AND HEAVY ARTILLERY TO DEFEAT THE TERRORISTS!

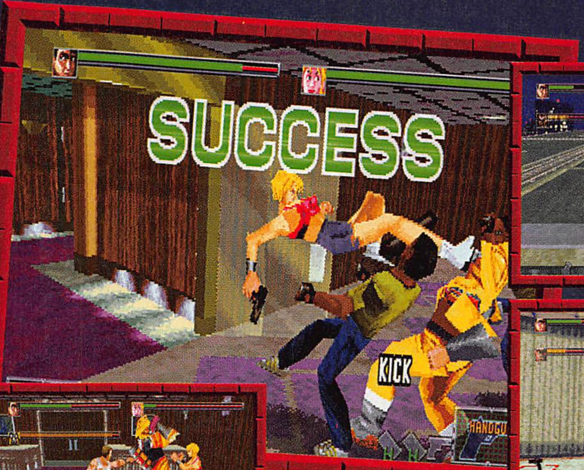








But, hey, not that challenging. After all, *Die Hard Arcade* is a beat-'em-up, and beat-'em-ups are all about fun. It may take a bit longer to get into than your usual Capcom fist-fest, but the premise is still the same: pummel everyone! You and a friend face a seemingly un-ending barrage of thugs, ninjas, robots and gun-toting perps as you travel through a variety of cool environments in your bid to save the President's daughter. You're not just limited to your fists either: Literally anything you can see can be used as a weapon: furniture, brooms, broken bottles, pepper shakers, axes, swords, chairs, anything!! However, by far the most effective weapons are the guns.

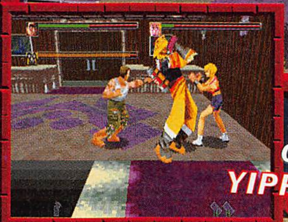












COMBINE PUNCHES AND KICKS TO CREATE POWERFUL NEW ATTACKS!
YIPPEE-KAI-AY, MUDDY FUNSTER!

Now there have been beat-'em-ups with guns before but never anything quite this excessive. Whether it's a Beretta, an H&K, a rocket launcher or even an anti-tank gun (which really has no business being in a beat-'em-up), the feeling you get from mercilessly gunning down your enemy before they can even lay a finger on you is hugely satisfying. You can store up to five clips at once, and it's possible to complete whole sections of the game just by laying down some John Woo-style gunplay.

Die Hard Arcade is not perfect. The graphics are occasionally glitchy, and more seriously, the whole experience is way to short. You can earn yourself almost unlimited credits by scoring on the accompanying 8-bit *Deep Scan* game (earning credits, now *there's* a thought), thus making it possible to blunder through the whole game on your first go. Personally I enjoy seeing how far I can get on just one credit (like Ranking Mode from *Virtua Cop 2*), but if you're the kind of gamer who feels they've beaten a game once they've completed it, you'll probably want to look elsewhere.

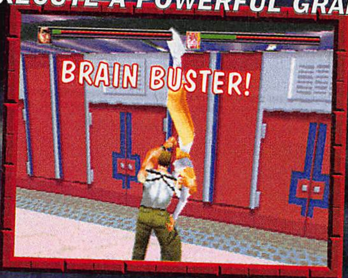


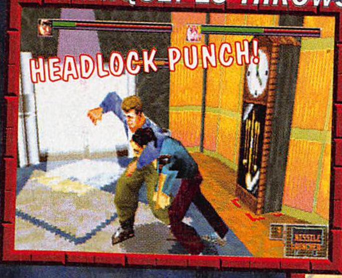


CLOSE ON THE ENEMY AND USE THE GRAB ATTACK!

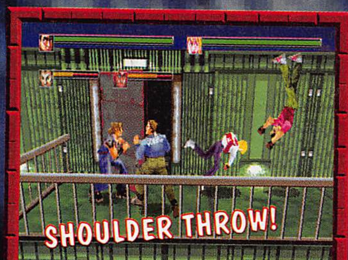
GET IN RANGE THEN EXECUTE A POWERFUL GRAB TECHNIQUE! 15 THROWS TO CHOOSE FROM!

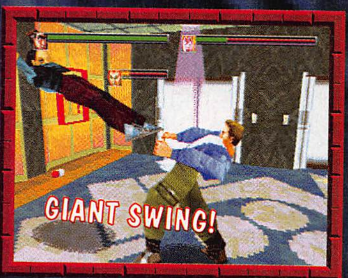












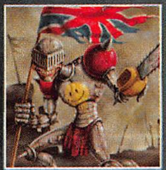


Still, there's no denying that *Die Hard Arcade* represents a significant step forward for the scrolling beat-'em-up (even though it doesn't really scroll). AM1 has provided a fresh slant on a well-worn genre while at the same time delivering some good, solid, old school action. It's the best of its kind—a million times better than *Batman Forever* (ironically another ST-V game)—and a heaven send for beat-'em-up fans like myself. *K*

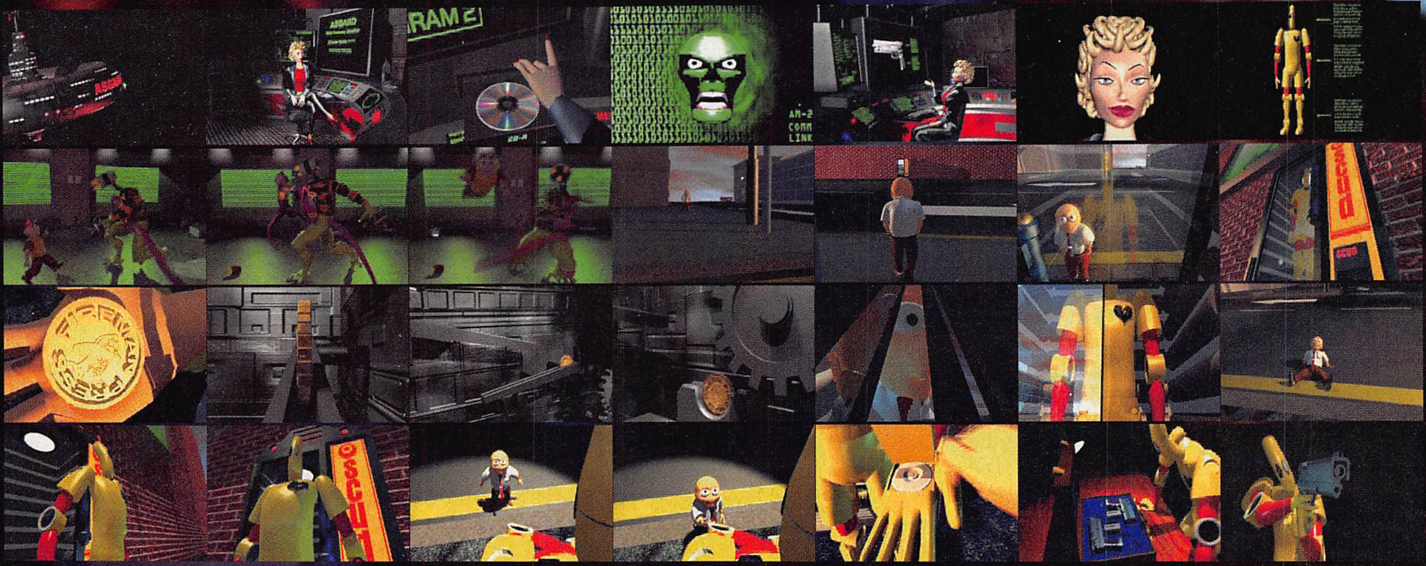
R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

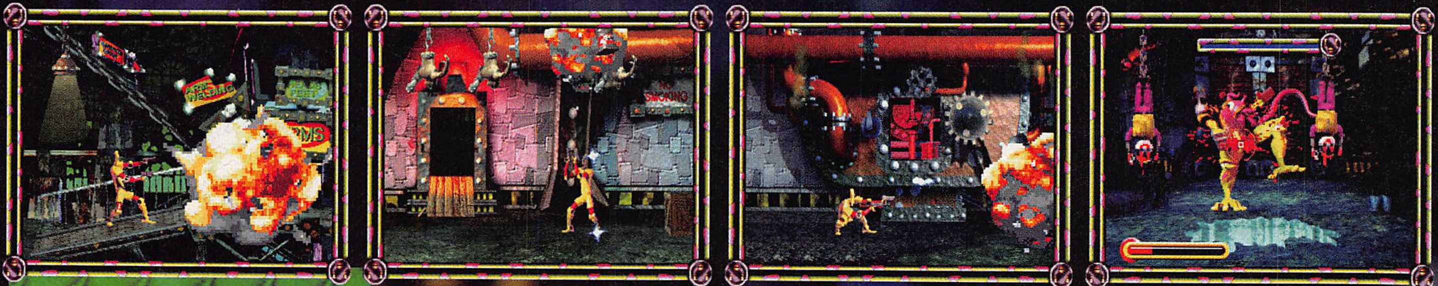
DEVELOPER - SEGA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - 1ST QUARTER '97

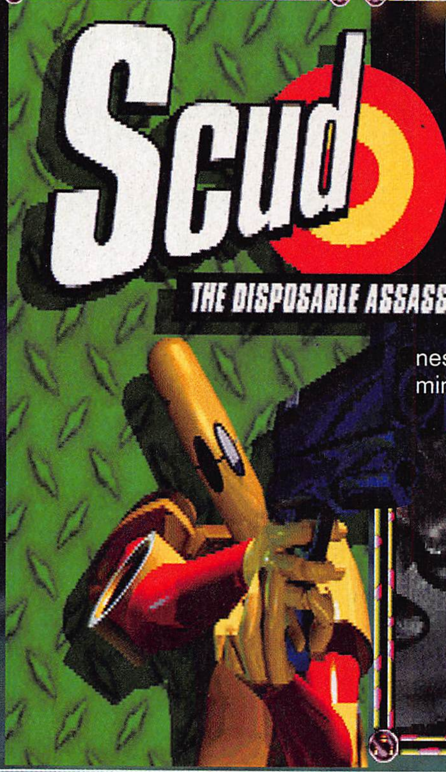


KNIGHTMARE
A 'grown up' beat 'em up!



WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING DEAD, A GUN IS AS CLOSE AS THE NEAREST VENDING MACHINE. BUT WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING DEAD AND YOU'RE NOT UP TO THE JOB YOU WANT A SCUD.





Unless you frequent the intriguing world of underground comics, you've probably never heard of SCUD. A SCUD, by definition, is a disposable assassin (hence the title). If you want something dead but don't wanna get your hands dirty, you need only visit your local SCUD vending machine. As our story begins, Herschel, who's being held responsible for the mad robot SCUD calls 'JEFF' which is loose in the mannequin factory (it slams one kid into the ground and them slaps him bursting and gushing against the screen, then rips another in half), dispenses a SCUD to take care of business. This SCUD, however, has overridden its programming and has a will to live. Normally, a SCUD self-

Pavlov, Nathan Twist... even The Head of Jayne Mansfield... They all found SCUD and they all got killed.







REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

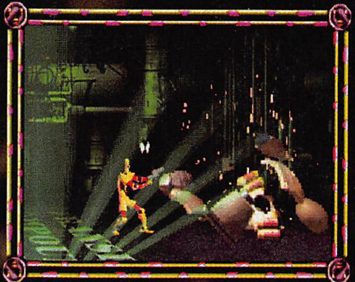
DEVELOPER - SEGASOFT	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - MARCH



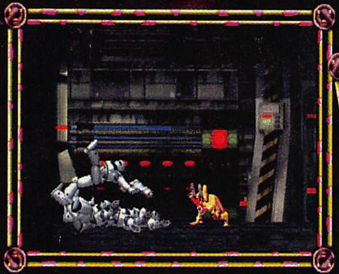
E. STORM I could really use one of these SCUDS...











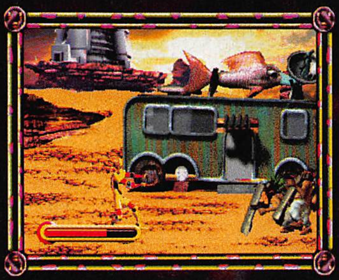


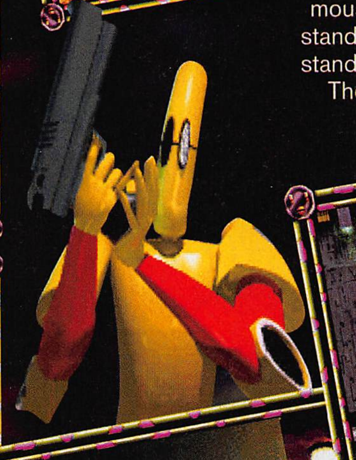
destructs after its 1st kill. But instead of killing its targets, this SCUD seriously wounds them and then keeps them alive on life support. Of course, this costs money, and so SCUD must offer his services as an assassin for hire, in order to stay alive.

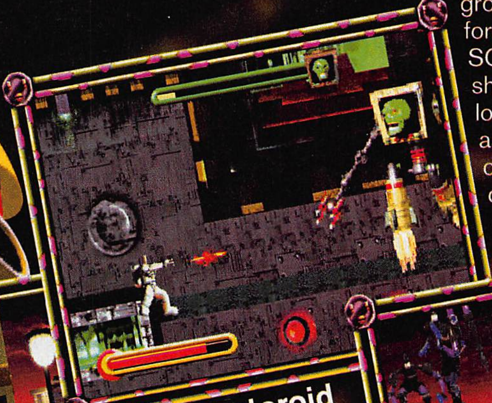
Meanwhile, ASGARD (the evil corporation in our adventure) wants SCUD eliminated and so, our noodle-haired vixen (see intro shots opposite page) sends out the fearsome 'AM minus 2' to do away with the runaway robot. All of this is set up and maintained brilliantly throughout the game via some high-quality (funny, too) FMV sequences.

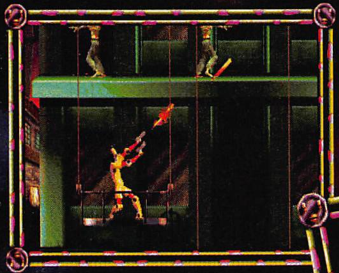
SCUD can be played by one or two players, one with a gun or mouse, while the other controls SCUD with a pad, or, by one player with standard controls (jump, kick, duck, and shoot) or just the gun. I can't stand 2-player action or gun games so I braved it on my own.

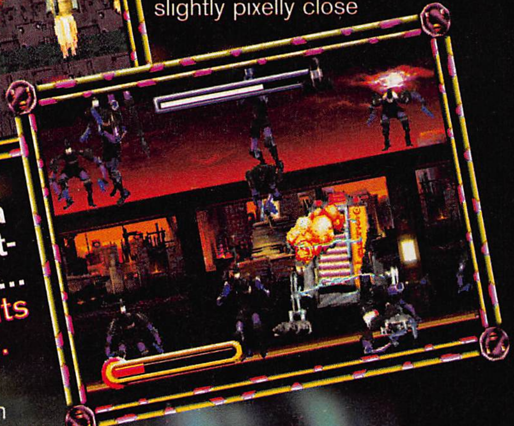
The 2D sequences take place on beautifully rendered & animated backgrounds and consist of mild platforming and non-stop shooting. SCUD can shoot the enemies' shots, but they shoot high and low at a fever pitch, so this isn't as simple as it sounds. SCUD can also swipe enemies at close range, which produces a slightly pixelly close up encounter. When SCUD switches to the 3D gun mode (FMV backgrounds with nicely animated sprites coming directly at the player) SCUD zips back and a crosshair appears. A diverse element, yes, but a fun one... well, perhaps for some. I've never liked gun games and so this is a feature I can live without.













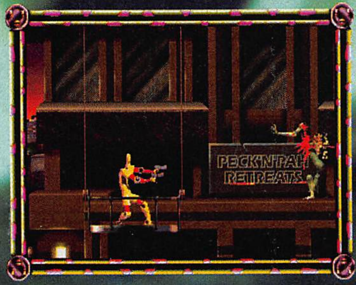


Poly-steroid armor and a month's battery supply... SCUD wants more life...

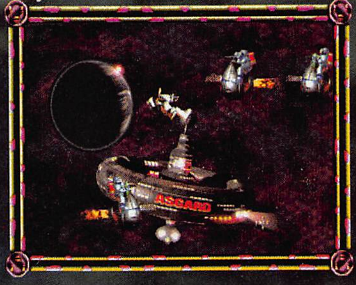


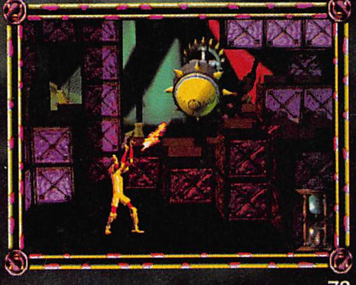
For the most part SCUD is a basic side-scroller laced with rendered characters, digitized explosions, generous parallax, gruesome hits, and a truly likeable hero. Bosses are big but pixelly and, for the most part, very easy to kill when compared to the challenge the levels themselves dish out. The soundtrack is of the grating industrial sort and ranges from good to pass-the-ear-plugs.

It's when you combine the solid 2D, passable 3D, unique 2-player function, and excellent FMV, that SCUD begins to take shape. SegaSoft has a few screws to tighten before SCUD's ready for a review and I wait with angst for the finished product. 2D after all is the SS's strong point so SCUD should begin to fill a gap that you could drive a Humvee through. *ES*





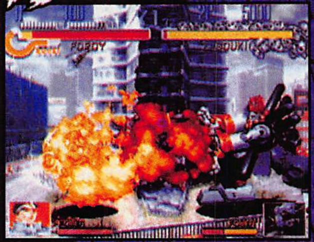






Capcom's mech based 2-D fighter is on its way to the Saturn as we speak, and as you can see, Capcom has added some new characters! That Akuma gets around eh. CB has a March release date in Japan, so expect a US version this Summer-3rd Qtr.





DUKE NUKEM



This is the one I'm waiting for. The Saturn programming gurus at Lobotomy are currently in the process of converting the PC first person shooter Duke Nukem 3D to the Saturn. It's commonly acknowledged as one of the greatest Doom-style games ever made, and in single player mode it's even more enjoyable than the mighty Quake (which Lobotomy is also converting to the Saturn). No word yet on how much of the sex and violence will remain intact.



MANX TT Super Bike



Tantalus' port of AM3's hit coin-op is finally nearing completion, and should be on the shelves in Japan by the time you read this. We've played it, and are happy to report that it's a pretty faithful conversion, especially with the analog pad. The frame rate is a consistent 30, while the pop-up isn't as severe as something like Daytona. We'll bring you a full review next issue.





INCLUDES ALL NEW SATURN MODE!!













GREAT NEWS!!

Those of you who tuned in to my import review of Shining last month may have noticed how irked I was that Sega (at the time) hadn't considered it for US release. Without going too much into detail let me simply proclaim that my rant was not in vain. SOA started localization shortly thereafter and the game is now set for a Summer release here in the US. Simply one of the finest Sega RPGs ever, Shining will surely begin to make up for the inexcusable lack of Japanese software making its way stateside. Things will hopefully continue along this path in the future. I'll have a US preview and be able to comment on the US translation in the May issue.

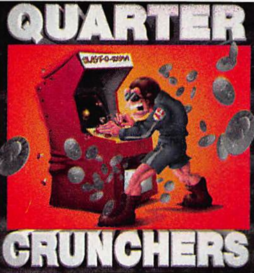












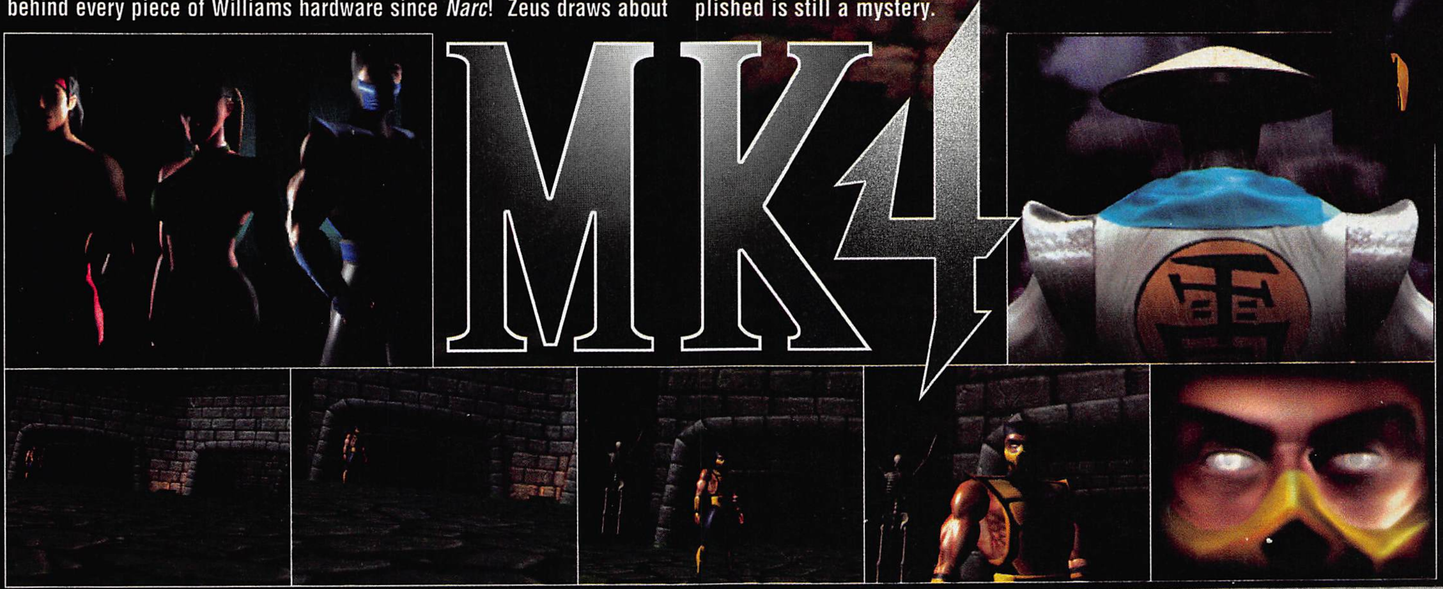
Aw yeah baby, *Mortal Kombat* is back, and this time it's making a leap bigger than any of its predecessors. *MK4* is currently around 30% complete and is scheduled for release in either June or July, although nothing is final. There is no story yet, but when asked if there were any new gameplay features, such as *MK3*'s Run button, *MK* programmer and producer Ed Boon replied, "New button? No! A new mode of gameplay? Yes!" We know *MK4* is 3D, but as to how much this will effect the way the game plays is unknown at present. What we do know is that *MK*'s trademark finishing moves (Fatalities, Babalities, etc.) are out. As Boon stated, "*MK4* will not feature any of *MK*'s trademark cartoon finishing moves because we want the game to be much darker and scarier."

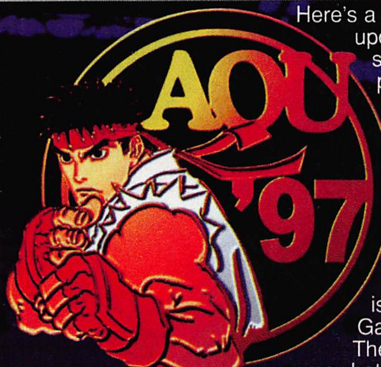
Gameplay changes aside, the other major advancement in *MK4* is the hardware. The game now runs on a 64-bit system entitled "Zeus." The hardware was designed by Williams tech wizard Mark Loffredo, the man behind every piece of Williams hardware since *Narc*! Zeus draws about 1.2 million polygons a second with all features on; i.e. shading, anti-aliasing, load-management, light sourcing... the works! Take a look at the shots on this page... They aren't from any rendered CG. They're real game shots!

MK4's cast of 12 warriors includes the return of Rayden, Sub-Zero, Liu Kang, Scorpion and possibly Sonya, with the rest composed entirely of new characters. The game uses approximately 2,800 to 3,800 polygons per character at 60 frames per second, with detailed real time 3D backgrounds. You should be able to recognize the background in these shots—it's from Goro's Lair. Does this mean the return of Goro? Only Tobias and Boon know and they're not saying...

Finally, we have some news on the home versions of *MK4*. Both an N64 and PS version are scheduled for a release later this year, though how a conversion of such powerful hardware will be accomplished is still a mystery.







Here's a last-second update on the AOU show, Japan's premier arcade game exhibition, which was held at Makuhari Messe in Chiba on 2/18 and 2/19. Rest assured, we'll have a full AOU report in the next issue of GameFan.

The '97 AOU was a somewhat subdued one, with few huge announcements other than SNK's Neo•Geo 64. Sega had three games: *House of the Dead*, an impressive Model 3 shooter, *Top Skater*, a skateboarding game, and *Virtua Striker 2*, a Model 3 soccer game. Namco's booth was semi-disappointing with *Tekken 3* and *Alpine Racer 2*, both of which had already been seen, and *Armadillo Racing*, an innovative racing game controlled with a trackball. Konami debuted their new driving game *Jam Racer*, which ran on their 5,000,000-polygon-per-second Cobra hardware. Show floor reports say *Jam Racer* makes *Scud Race* look like a toy, but only time will tell. Konami also had the innovative *HangPilot*, a hang-gliding game with two screens—one ahead and one below you—to simulate a full 3D view. Taito was showing a brief demo of *Psychic Force 2* running on their new Taito Wolf 3D hardware, but, unfortunately, no pictures were allowed. Capcom, in my opinion, had the best showing: *Street Fighter III*, *Vampire Savior*, and *Battle Circuit*. *VS* is the latest game in the ultra-popular (in Japan, at least) *Vampire* series. There's not much room to go into detail about it here, but expect a full preview next issue. *SFIII* needs no introduction, and *Battle Circuit* was a cool, comical side-scrolling beat-'em-up in the *Final Fight* tradition.

Each year, Japanese arcade magazine *Gamest* polls all comers to the show on what their favorite games were. The rankings were as follows: 1.) *Vampire Savior*, 2.) Tekken 3, and 3.) *Street Fighter III*. Look for more AOU next month!!




Alpine Racer 2


HangPilot


House of the Dead

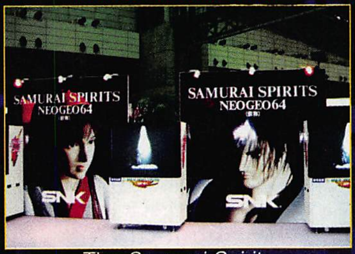

Battle Circuit



Vampire Savior



SNK's incredibly hardcore Band of Fighters!! Yes, they're mannequins



The *Samurai Spirits Neo•Geo 64* display


Godlike standups at the Capcom booth. I must own these!

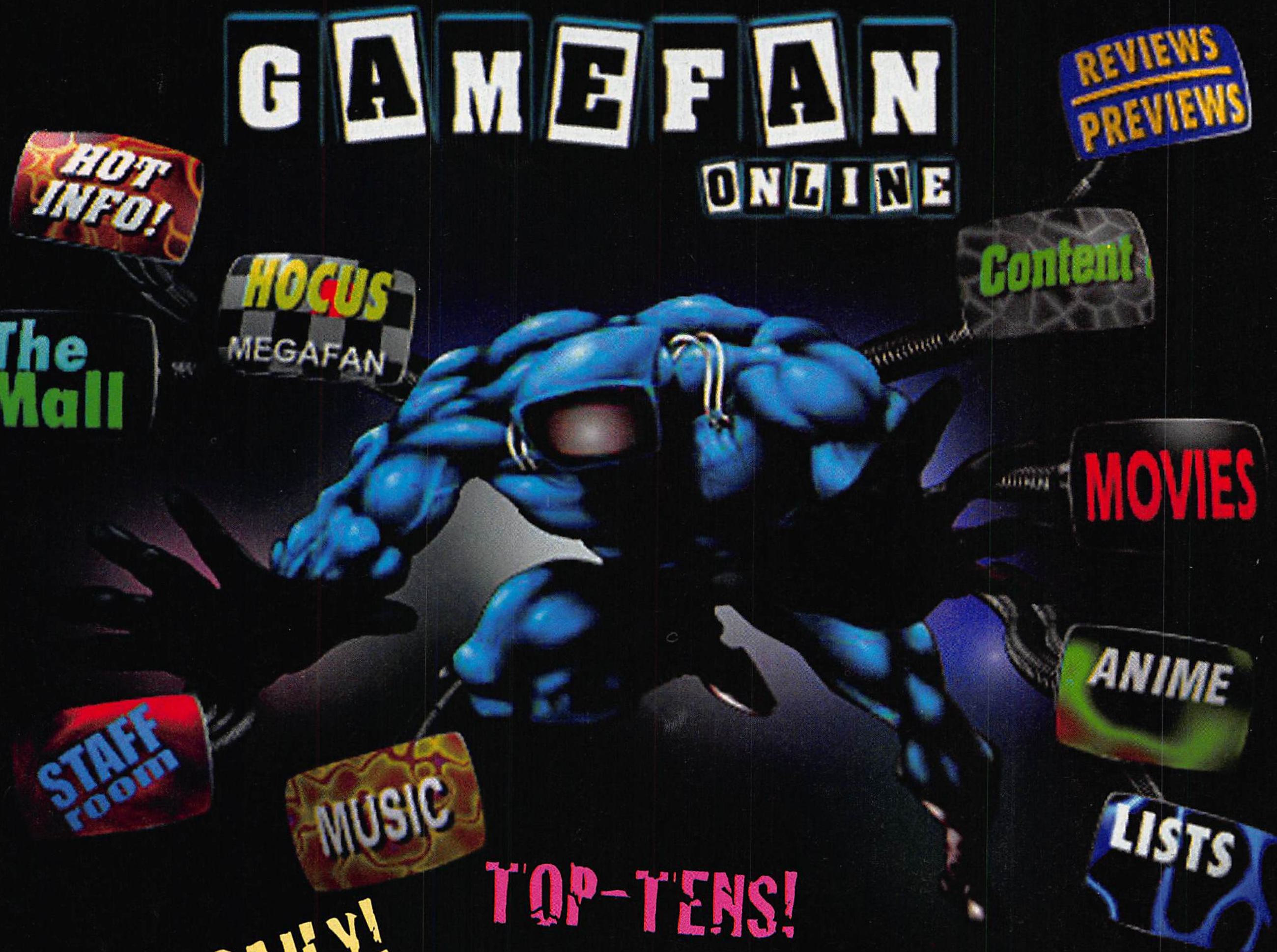
SAMURAI SPIRITS NEO•GEO 64

The most surprising announcement at the AOU came in the form of SNK's new 64-bit hardware, the Neo•Geo 64. A video of *Samurai Spirits Neo•Geo 64* was unveiled.



Details on the game were few and far between, but it appears there are four new characters, one of which looks suspiciously like Rei Ayanami from the popular *Evangelion* series. *Samurai* is at an extremely early level of development, but expect more on *SSNG64* next issue! This is the only game in which you can "embody fierce chambara in parallel 3-D worlds," so be prepared!!





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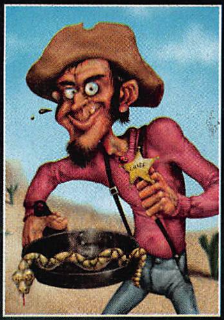
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CHIEF HAMBLETON TOUR OF DUTY PART 2: ANOTHER AUDIENCE WITH CORE DESIGN!





"Core" Blimey, if it ain't me old muckers from across the pond. Knock me down if this 'ere Europa special don't feature more of them there blokes from Core. Are you gawping?

The town: Derby, England. The weather: Freezing. The Mission: Interrogate the rest of the Core Development staff to find out some of the company's plans for 1997 and beyond. The Game: Judgement Force. The Result: Even more informative shenanigans from the world of Core Design.



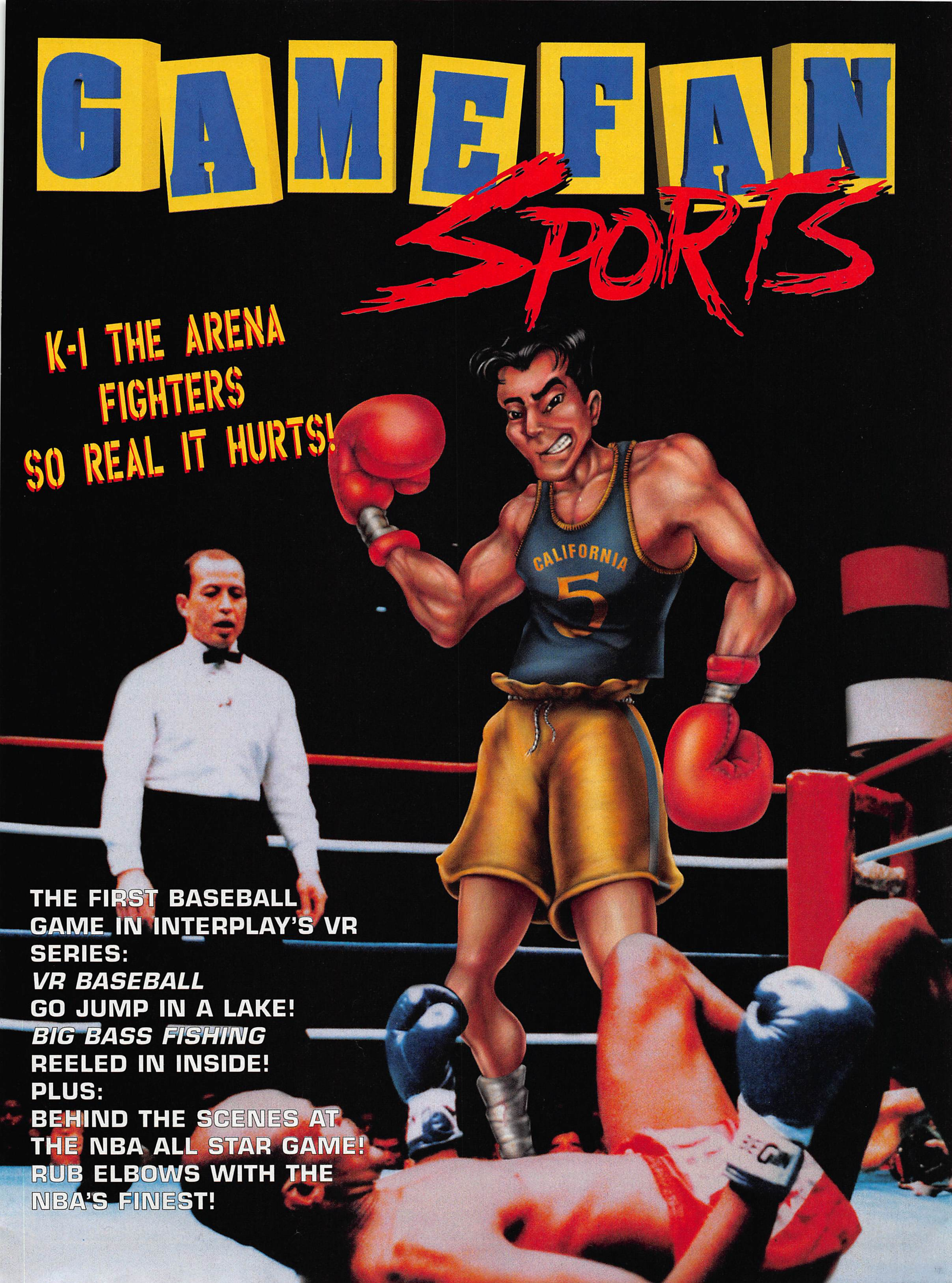
The men of *Judgement Force*, currently beavering away on what could be the best fighting action title since *Streets of Rage*. From left to right; Mac Avory (Programmer), David Long (Programmer) and Roberto Cirillo (Artist).

Core have three more top titles planned for this year; *Swagman* (see elsewhere in this issue), *Ninja* and *Judgement Force*. Being rather partial to a spot of fisticuff action, I headed down to the catacombs housing the gentlemen responsible for *Judgement Force*. Here's what they had to say about the best-looking polygon punch-up game yet seen...

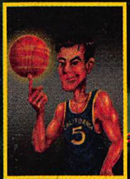
CH: *So this is the fighting game. What is the actual title?*
TJF (Team Judgement Force): *Judgement Force* is the working title.
CH: *And you've been working on it for at least ten months?*
TJF: Probably a bit less. Obviously, it's because it's the sort of game we haven't done before; we're just trying to work it all out.
CH: *It's going to be released on three platforms? PC, Saturn, and PlayStation?*
TJF: Yup.
CH: *Which is the most complete version?*
TJF: The Saturn version.
CH: *What sort of inspiration did you take? I mean, did you look at stuff like* Tekken 2 *or* Street Fighter*—do you have any influences?*
TJF: The old, the good old *Streets of Rage*, and the new fighting games. It's basically taking a game like *Streets of Rage* and combining with all of the 3D games.
CH: *Is it more of a walk along, rather than sort of a set fight?*
TJF: Yeah. Yes, you progress on to the next situation in an ongoing scenario.
CH: *How many fighters are there going to be, do you think?*
TJF: We prefer the term 'contestants.' Four are available.
CH: *So this is more like a sort of* Streets of Rage *in 3D?*
TJF: Yup.
CH: *At the moment, approximately how many polygons is each character made up of?*
TJF: We're trying to keep the characters down to between 150 and 300.
CH: *What's the sort of plot behind this... do you have one yet?*
TJF: We kind of had one but we couldn't use it. It's definitely the good guys versus the bad guys.
CH: *Would you say you took a lot of influence for this from* Final Fight *and* Die Hard Arcade*?*
TJF: Yeah, you really have to go back and look at the older games and see what made them work. Then add dramatically to it. It's a completely different game than *Die Hard*— you can't really compare them. You can't say they are both directional 3D games, because *Die Hard* really isn't a 3D game.
CH: *How many of you are involved in the game's creation, how big is the team?*
TJF: Round about four at the moment.
CH: *The backgrounds are 2D sort of scrolling, would you say?*
TJF: Well yeah, the really far away backgrounds are 2D.
CH: *How many moves per character do you think there will be?*
TJF: About 35, so far.
CH: *How many levels are there going to be?*
TJF: Maybe a dozen, without loads of power ups and huge zones to explore.
CH: *When do you think we'll see a version in the States? Probably April or May?*
TJF: Maybe later. We're planning a Summer release.

The time had come for me to leave. I thanked my gracious hosts, and waited anxiously for the games to be finished. Judgement Force, and another game called Ninja (both of which were in very early stages of development) looked to be very exciting games indeed. The next year should see Core propelled to the forefront of video games development, and rightly so. Not only does Core have some of the best programmers and artists in the business, but the nicest bunch of people you're ever likely to meet. GameFan waits for the final products with giddy anticipation.


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BLACK BELT
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One complete set with 60-lb. heavy bag, leather speed bag, leather bag gloves, Everlast robe and boxing trunks. (1 winner)
FIRST PRIZE (5)
A copy of K-1 The Arena Fighters for the Sony PlayStation. (5 winners)
SECOND PRIZE (10)
1 year subscription to Black Belt magazine and an Everlast Gym Bag. (10 winners)
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CONTEST RULES
NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter mail a standard postcard containing your name, address, phone number and age to "K-1 The Arena Fighters Contest" c/o T•HQ, 5016 North Parkway Calabasas, Suite 100, Calabasas, California 91302. Limit one entry per Participant. Entries must be received by May 15th, 1997. All entries become the exclusive property of T•HQ/GAMEFAN magazine (sponsors) and will not be acknowledged or returned. Sponsors assume no responsibility for lost, mutilated, late, ineligible, incomplete, postage due or misdirected entries. Drawing will be held on or about May 20th, 1997.


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BIG BASS FISHING
REELED IN INSIDE!
PLUS:
BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE NBA ALL STAR GAME!
RUB ELBOWS WITH THE NBA'S FINEST!

GAMEFAN Sports



JOE KIDD



JACQUES STRAP



HOCKEY

EA's Mask-erade Celebration

Once again, EA shows the sports game industry why their motto is, "It's in the Game." It's not enough to just make a fun game anymore, but rather an all-encompassing experience. In their never-ending search for individualism and the cutting edge, EA may have opened yet another porthole to the sportsgame world beyond. Chip Lange, Director of Sports Marketing says quite simply, "EA's goal is to find ways to differentiate us from the rest."

About 3 years ago, the competition started to catch on to all of the NHL/NHLPA licensing, an aspect of sports games that was used exclusively by EA before then. EA found themselves forced to brainstorm for new and innovative ideas. Back then, the helmets in EA's *NHL* series were plain white. "How cool would it be to have the actual helmet designs of each goalie?" they pondered. After researching the matter, they found that the masks weren't even licensed by the NHL, but rather by a group based out of Santa Monica, called Five Hole. The two companies put a deal together, and came to an agreement that allowed EA to have the helmet designs in their game.

What transpired from there may be termed "a stroke of luck." The game developers discovered they needed actual, physical renditions of each helmet in order to accurately, compose 3-D, rendered helmets in the game. Five Hole got busy the following 6 months, producing 50 full-sized helmets for EA; thus making EA the proud owner of the largest collection of goalie masks in the world. EA proceeded to showcase this collection at trade shows around the country, including the infamous E3. What they discovered was a wildly popular reaction to the collection, and a huge parade of requests.

Needless to say, EA was thrilled at the response and subsequently introduced their 'Stanley Cup Collection'—a collection of miniaturized masks of the last 5 Stanley Cup winning teams (New Jersey Devils, Colorado Avalanche, New York Rangers, Florida Panthers, and Montreal Canadiens). Why the hype over a hockey mask? Unlike football helmets or baseball caps, the hockey masks are highly individualized, often reflecting not only the team's city or mascot, but sometimes even the goalie's very own personality. The reason for this lies in the fact that each goalie contracted out and worked with their very own artist, and worked together to culminate those visions onto the helmets. Flairs of individualism can be seen on helmets like Florida's 'Beezer,' who sports a large, yellow 'B' on his helmet or teams like the New York Rangers, who created a new-look, third Jersey that is based on goalie Mike Richter's Statue of Liberty-based, mask design.

All 5 of these miniature masks are available through EA now, and color photos of each one are enclosed with each copy of *NHL '97*. 16 more masks will be available by September, just in time for the Holidays, including: Hackett of Chicago, Lalime of Pittsburgh, Hearsh of Vancouver and 13 others.

To order, call EA's Hockey Mask Hotline at: 1-800-245-4525.





KIDD'S CORNER



ACCLAIM *Shines on All-Star Weekend*

Now, if you've ever seen the movie, "Midnight Express", you would have frightening and ghastly misconceptions of the country called Turkey. Because upon visiting the land, you would find that it is as beautiful and vastly enjoyable as a Thanksgiving Dinner! Well, quite sometime ago, Howard Cosell coined the endearing term "Mistake by the Lake" in reference to Cleveland, Ohio. As I boarded the plane en route to Cleveland, all the dreary images of the snow-covered Dawg Pound, and smokestacks shooting into the grey, tumultuous sky filled my mind. If I weren't such a massive hoops fan, I may not have found the courage to make the journey that Acclaim had so generously provided for me.

Well to my surprise, I fell into a city bustling with life, from the dramatic architectural structures and art pieces downtown, to the wildly popular restaurants and nightclubs over in the Flats. They should have called the city the Bars full of Stars—well, on this weekend, at least. Two feet to the right of me was Kevin McHale... Whoa! Swing around, there goes Dr. J... Is that really Bill Russell over there?... Excuse me, Mr. Chamberlain, may I have your autograph?... I just want to get one more photo with Rick Barry... So, Larry, who's really the greatest?

Everywhere we went, we were bumping into Grant Hill, sitting across from ESPN's Mike Tirico or chatting with Leslie Visser. NBA Jam Session was hoppin' with 3-on-3 tourneys, 7, 8 and 9 foot rims for slammin', sports card vendors galore, various games and contests for prizes, and Acclaim's very own 500 square foot *NBA Jam* booth—what a sight to behold! Acclaim packed it in with a multitude of PlayStations and television monitors, as head-to-head competition took place everywhere you turned. Kids and grown-ups alike tested their skills and entered the *NBA Jam* tournament that started with hundreds, and ended with one. Acclaim boasted visits by Desmond Howard, Antonio Freeman, Marlon Wayans, Kadeem Hardison and more. All participated in the fun and games, but the contestants in the tourney took their Jams seriously, because the winner would walk away with the grand prize—a $5000 *NBA Jam* coin op of their own. When it was all said and done, the semi-finalists received prize packages of games, tickets and apparel, totalling over an estimated $500 apiece. The runner-up to the grand prize received a package even more loaded, estimated around $1000!

One of the unsung highlights of the weekend for me however, was meeting with the Acclaim crew as well as several of the sports editors from other magazines. The reason it proved to make such an impact on me, is that just like my misconceptions of Cleveland, Acclaim proved me wrong on many of my Big Company stereotypes. Mike Jerchower, Assistant Product Manager, explained, "I'm not gonna lie to you, we've had a rough year..." What Mike was referring to, was the reputation of mediocrity that Acclaim's sports titled had earned over the year(s). He went on to explain how sports games had always taken a backseat before, and how *Jam* was treated like King, while all the others were somewhat orphaned. But he then went on to demonstrate how a new emphasis and priority was being placed on sports, in terms of concentrating on licensing, getting top-rated sports figures like Brett Favre and Shawn Kemp to endorse their products, building a $100 million motion capture studio of their own... so advanced that even WB used it to film parts of *Space Jam*, and even increasing their budget for sports product to an enormous $20 million!

But aside from these revolutionary and cutting edge changes, the thing that struck me was the sincerity of this Acclaim crew. Here is a heavy-hitting, big-time, interactive entertainment company basically saying, "We've screwed up, and we want your help to improve," and who better to ask, but the guys who make reviewing sports games a career? What they got was a downpour of sports game input, from years and years of gaming experience, dating back to the days of Intellivision and Atari to the unveiling of N64, from collectors of baseball cards to the most die-hard of Warriors' fans. The results were extraordinary, not only in feedback, but the relationships that were built, because of one simple fact—game editors WANT good games to review, and would love nothing more than an opportunity to help make that happen. They're the first company I've been in contact with that has actually been gracious enough to ask for help—not a guise pretending to ask what I liked about certain games, but simply a humble, yet wise request.

On more than one occasion, various game developers approached me to discuss new ideas, and my thoughts on how to execute them. Acclaim took the time, amidst one of the busiest events of the year, to discuss improving their product. They educated me on the finer points of obtaining licensing, the obscurities of the motion capture process as well as the industry as a whole—no condescension, not once. You may wonder why I share this side of the business with you, and my reason is to show you that sometimes there are faces and names within those big, nameless corporations. ***JK***

Joe Kidd can be e-mailed at: rlee@metropolismedia.com

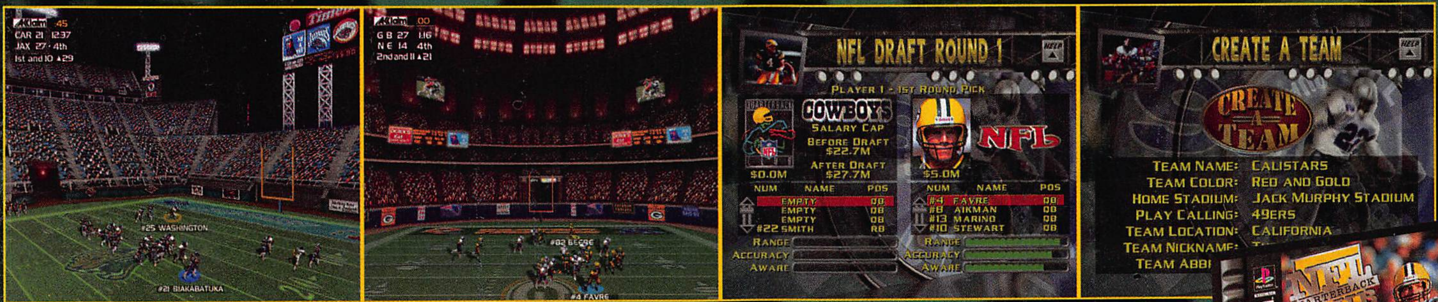
COMING THIS YEAR BY ACCLAIM!

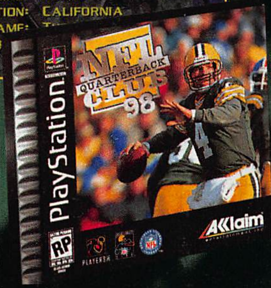


NHL BREAKAWAY 98

Well hockey fans, I've seen the future in hockey games. *NHL Breakaway '98* should get a standing ovation from all of you. You will experience the most features of any hockey game available, including: Hi-Res 3-D, polygonal, motion-captured graphics that don't takeaway from the tempo of the action, a Momentum-Based Checking System that is determined by players' weights and speed, Playbook-Based AI that sets up actual plays from the designated teams, Variable Player Sizes based on real physical attributes, Non-Stick Handler Control, a Total Team Management System in which you receive points which are applied toward improving your coaching, player development, and injury therapy, Icon Passing, Create Players that sport their new name on their jersey, World Tournament Teams, including USA, Canada and Russia, Full Season Stat-Tracking, Multiple Season Play, AI-based trades, and advanced coaching strategies as well... You better believe this hockey game means business. It's licensed by the NHL, NHLPA and STATS, Inc.

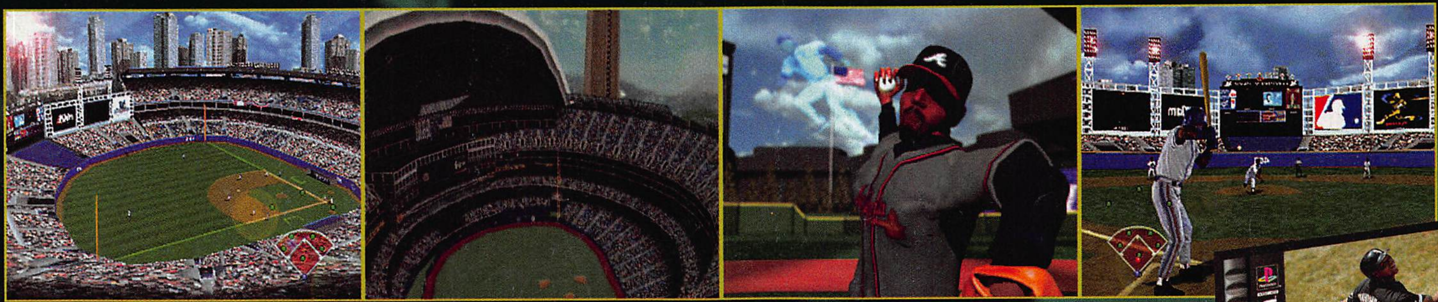
Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and Windows '95 **Players:** 1-8 **Available** August 1997





On January 22, 1997 Acclaim made another advancement toward the top, when they announced the signing of Super Bowl MVP Brett Favre to endorse their *NFL Quarterback Club '98*. Upon the announcement, Favre proclaimed, "It's an honor to be selected as Acclaim's featured quarterback... and I look forward to working with the Acclaim sports team to create the best football game ever." Needless to say, Acclaim was ecstatic over the signing, but know it takes a lot more than a big name to make the game. *QB Club '98* will have all 30 NFL teams, with corresponding 3D rendered stadiums and over 1500 players! You will have exclusive in-game profiles and game tips from the quarterbacks themselves. You like the 'Niners? Well now you can pre-program your entire sequence of opening offensive plays, just like they do. Players' injuries will affect game and season performances as well. Stat tracking over the entire season will include league leaders in 9 different categories. And all this complete with Marv Albert calling the play by play.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn, DOS CD-ROM **Players:** 1-8 **Available:** August 1997

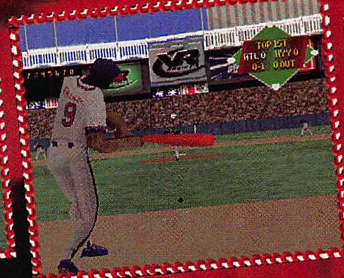




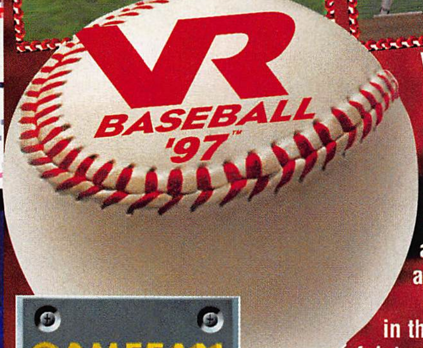
Spring training is upon us and not a moment to soon, as Acclaim's *All-Star Baseball '97* (featuring MVP Frank Thomas) is about to hit the shelves. This '98 title will feature all 28 teams, logos and 3D rendered stadiums—even the new 1998 expansion teams, the Arizona Diamondbacks and Tampa Bay Devil Rays. Frank Thomas got personal, by involving himself in the Motion Capture Animations. He is not alone in this game, as you will have over 700 MLB players to pick up or trade for. *All-Star* features the complete 1997 MLB schedule, and offers full season stat-tracking as well. 6 gameplay modes are offered: Exhibition, Season, Playoffs, All-Star, Batting Practice and Home Run Derby. If you're familiar with ESPN's award winning baseball voice, Jon Miller, also of the San Francisco Giants... or should I say, if you're familiar with the game of baseball... Well, Acclaim has brought Miller aboard for the true-to-life MLB experience, with Miller's style and humorous anecdotes that have made him the voice of baseball over the last 20 years.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn **Players:** 1-2 **Available:** April 15, 1997




VR BASEBALL '97™



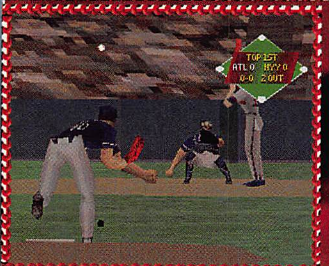
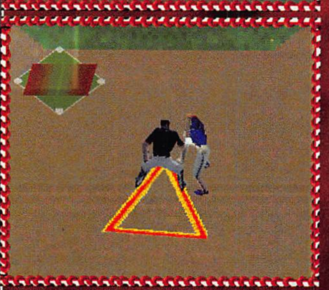
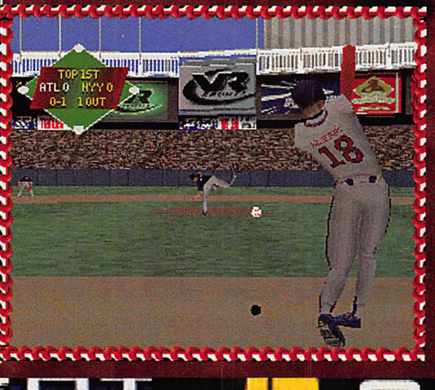
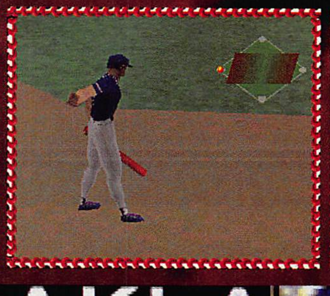
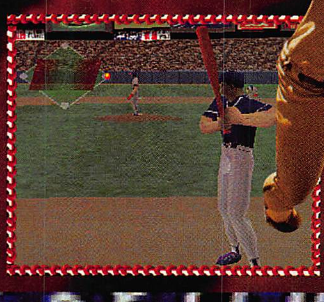
V*R Baseball* looks to have all the makings of a great baseball game. I mean, you read about all of the exciting features that are offered, like updated 1997 rosters with 1996 statistics, a real time scoreboard that keeps track of scores around the league as well as current statistics, real 3D stadiums with all 28 Major League Stadiums, and more. But the preview version that I played, although very early, has a long way to go.

You will swear by the sounds that you are actually in the ballpark; intermittent screams from the crowd, a faint murmur surrounding the yard, the announcer's voice resonating off the walls throughout, and the hollow crack of the bat penetrating the air. But then you open your eyes, and almost wish you hadn't. I will continue to use the disclaimer that it is a "very early version"—the graphics and frame-rate have a long way to go. The sluggish speed of the game is discomforting, springing anxiety upon you even between pitches. Usually highly detailed graphics can be blamed for such slow frame rate, but since there is not much precision to talk about, I can't understand why we are burdened with both situations. The animation has great promise, as you can even decipher clearly the players' names and numbers, as *VR Baseball* uses the much-acclaimed Motion Capture process and polygon players. However, they cheat themselves out of the full effect as you cannot tell one player's swing from another. I want to see a difference between Big Hurt's swing for the bleachers, and Nomo's chop to the infield. But to my dissatisfaction—no such luck.

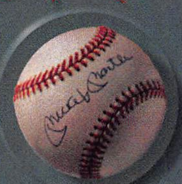
The good news is, I know that VR has big things planned for this game, and what I've seen is a very raw rendition of the real McCoy. They've gone to such lengths as to include 4 Uniform Options: home, away, alternate and practice. *VRB* will have true flight, bounce and roll for every surface from grass to astroturf. And one of the features I like most is that the pitchers start to lose their edge as innings wear on. Of course, this game would not be complete without VR's signature 360-degree camera rotation, which is the most dramatic effect that astonishes everyone. ***JK***





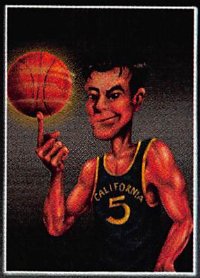
GAMEFAN SPORTS



PREVIEW

PlayStation

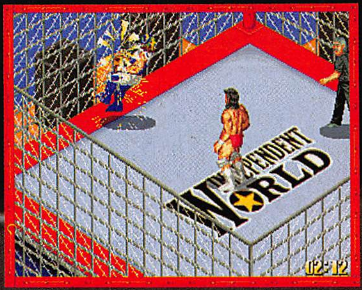
- DEVELOPER - VR SPORTS
- PUBLISHER - VR SPORTS
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
- AVAILABLE - SPRING '97

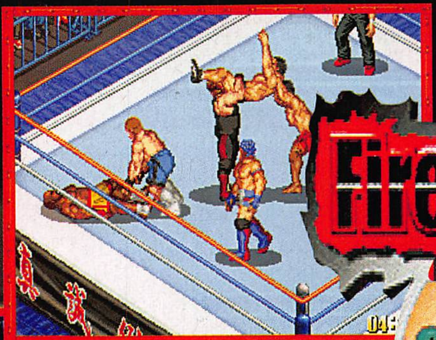


JOE KIDD
SUH-WING, BATTAH...



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"The most realistic fighting simulation on any platform!"
– GAMEFAN Magazine
Eight real athletes, each with their own fighting style
Stunning 3-D and 2-D arenas
Four fighting modes: One Player, VS, Tournament, and Team Battle
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Must be 18 years of age or have parental permission. Touch-tone phone required.



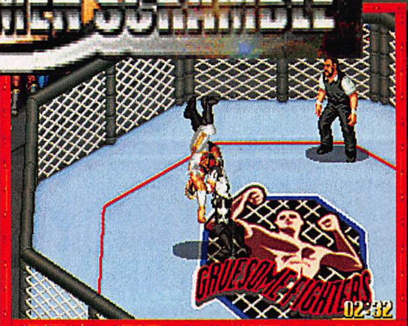


Fire Prowrestling S

6MEN SCRAMBLE









R REVIEW

PlayStation

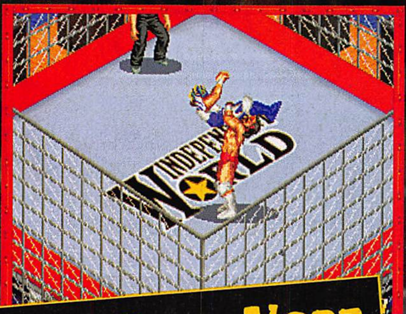
- DEVELOPER - HUMAN
- PUBLISHER - HUMAN
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-6
- DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
- AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



JACQUES STRAP
Mindless multi-player 2D wrestling extravaganza

UFC Style

Strap's one happy punk: They keep throwing these wrestling games my way and I keep liking them! This month's wrestling review spotlights Human's *Fire Prowrestling: Six Men Scramble.* I've been swamped by beautiful polygonal beasts for the last few months, so playing *Six Men Scramble* in all of hand drawn, 2D joy is a breath of fresh air.



Steel Cage Mode

Let's clear something up, straight off: *Six Men Scramble* is pure arcade action. It's not a simulation, and you won't need a strategy guide to play. Nothing but a ton of cool moves, easy controls, and constant mayhem. The wrestlers are fakes, but I found exact duplicates of practically every big name: Macho Man, Vader, The Giant, The Road Warriors, Sting, The Steiner Bros., and specialists like Maurice Smith, Peter Airts, and a ton of others. You might have noticed those last two aren't wrestlers, and that's exactly what this game offers: Athletes from wrestling, kick-boxing, shoot-fighting, even UFC, and they all use their custom styles and moves against each other. Ever wonder how the polished mat-fighting of Shamrock would hold up against the crushing slams and holds of the dog-faced gremlin? In *Six Men Scramble*, anything goes.

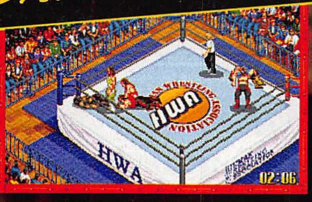
So you're still not interested? Try this one: Multi-tapped, 6 player, simultaneous wrestling. Steel cage, electric fence, octagon, and dome rings. Over 35 fighters, each with 5 different uniforms. Battle Royale, Death Match, Elimination, Tournament, and Wrestler Creation modes. There's even 4 different refs, and, you guessed it, some are blind, some are tough.



More? How 'bout silky-smooth scaling, to keep track of the action. Or zero slow-down, even when six mad sprites are pounding the ropes. Throw in devastating tag-team moves, power counters, even last-second reversals, and, well, I'm out of breath.

I'm going to cap this one off with an essential point: *Fire Prowrestling* is a must-have multi-player game, guaranteed to please. The moves are ultra-basic, there's an insane amount of characters and options, and...and it's 2D; imagine that? ***JS***

Battle Royale!







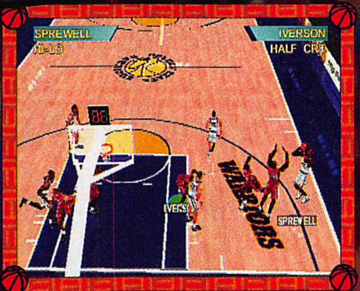




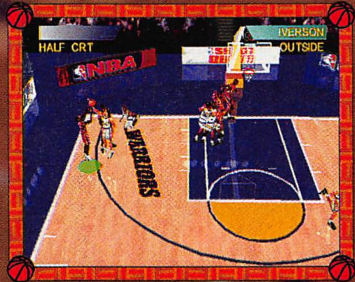

SHOOT OUT '97







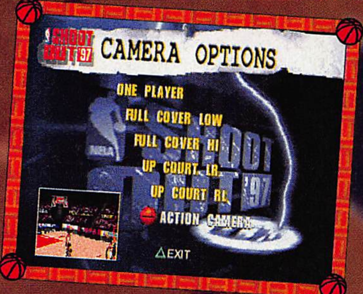




Sony's *NBA Shoot Out '97* has me intrigued. When all the while I thought *In the Zone 2* had great graphics and gameplay but not enough reality, I conversely felt that *NBA Live '97* was extremely realistic, but gameplay was a little too slow. *Shoot Out*, on the other hand, seems to have a combination of realism as well as tempo, and smooth gameplay that makes this hoops unique and appealing. I do, however, consider this game to be more *Zone*-ish than *Live*-ish. Steals are still very easy to get like *Zone*, but *Shoot Out* offers more in the way of one-on-one play, better timed rebounds, and the ability to take a charge.

The court graphics are great, but I would prefer more detail applied to the individual players. It's difficult to distinguish specific players, other than their skin tone and their speed... I mean, you can't accurately say, "Now that's Scottie Pippen." The only other hang-up I had, was that you cannot shoot a shot from the baseline, without the ball hitting the back end of the backboard, even though you are clearly in bounds... However, the fancy dribbling is the best I've seen—behind the backs, crossovers, and between the legs. I would, however, like to see the moves have more of an impact in terms of faking out the opponent. I found it difficult, but possible, to shake defenders one on one, and the interior game is equally difficult, as computer defenders do not go for the pump fakes and they block shots with the greatest of ease—no easy layups here! It is really refreshing to see guys taking charges and being sent sprawling on their backs, or big men in the paint being stripped as they bring the ball down—these are frequent occurrences in the actual game of basketball that are seldom or never seen in any of the other basketball sims.

You do have Create Player Mode which is always fun, and in Sony's version, they have allotted only a specific amount of skillz to be distributed where you desire. One of the more attractive features are the statistics that are shown by the players' head shots as they apply, like Jason Kidd with 25 assists. There are 6 different camera angles in the camera menu, which comes complete with a preview window. For all you rookie hounds, *Shoot Out '97* has the complete class of this year's talented rookies; high-school phenoms and senior standouts. You can play exhibition, a season w/ stat-tracking, or else shoot straight to the playoffs. This game does some real nice things, and is worth the investment. ***JK***

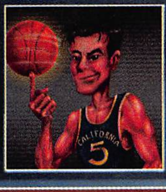






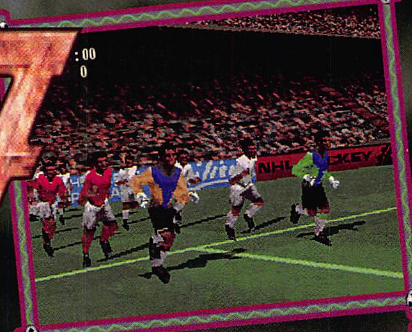
GAMEFAN SPORTS — REVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SONY	# OF PLAYERS - 1-8
PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



JOE KIDD
BEST YET?

FIFA 97







GAMEFAN SPORTS



PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

- DEVELOPER - EA
- PUBLISHER - EA
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-4
- DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
- AVAILABLE - NOW



JACQUES STRAP
This one needs help, serious help!



The Saturn *FIFA '97* was previewed last issue, if you remember, based on an early beta version. Our latest rev has reached its final beta stages, so this might be your last chance to check it out before it joins the PS version on the shelves.

The *FIFA* series has always benefited from the license. To most of us, this is cool (world teams, many leagues, etc.), but it's not going to determine if it's worth buying. We're just looking for the best playing/best looking soccer game, something like Sega's *WWS '97* or Konami's *Perfect Striker*. Anybody can see the power in these titles. *FIFA*'s been the best for years, but ever since it hit the PS and Saturn it's been filled with problems.

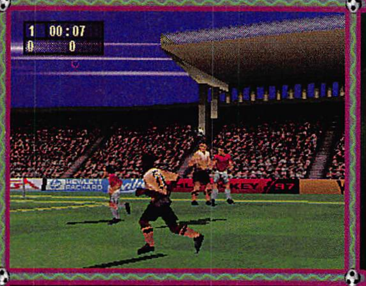
For starters, the Saturn version has a horrible frame rate. 20 fps, tops, and it shows. The indoor and outdoor stadiums are well-designed, I'll give them that, but the poor frame rate screws up everything. I guess the polygonal players really tax the Saturn hardware—no, wait! *VR Soccer* did it, *WWS '97* did it, and the frame rate was excellent in both games. No excuses; *FIFA '97* looks *bad*...

Why does it have to play as bad as it looks?! Really, it seems as though every movement you attempt to execute is accompanied by a severe lag time. You'll be chugging up the field, counting the frames per second on both hands, and the game just refuses to respond on time! Frustration, yes! It's like the whole game, and I mean *everything*, from bad control to chunky graphics, isn't moving as fast as it should (or could) be. If it means anything, the heel tricks and lobs offer delicious set up opportunities, just give yourself LOTS of time to pull one off.



J.S. personal note: Hey, I wasn't looking to bag on *FIFA '97*—it's just not too good. The final tweaks include new sky backgrounds, menu screen changes, little stuff like that. IF the frame rate goes through any improvements, I'll gladly eat my words, but the graphics are apparently done. Hopefully I'll be back with good news-if not, stay away from the Saturn version of *FIFA '97*. **JS**

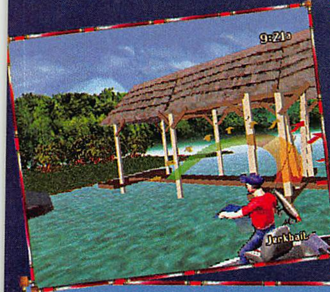


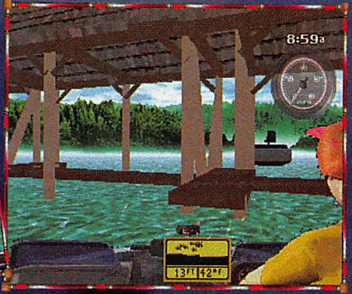






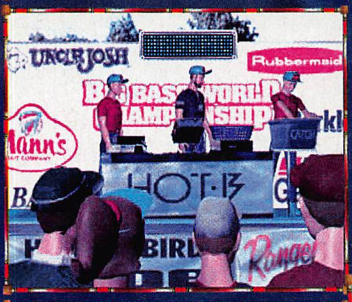
BIG BASS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP













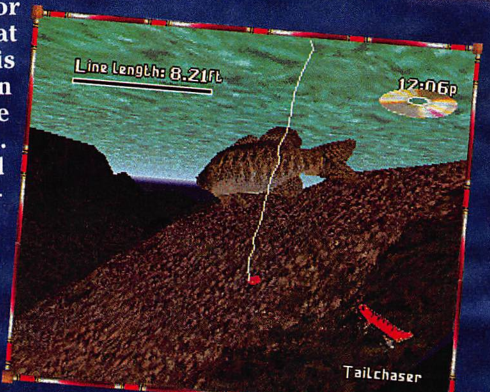


Forget about *FFVII*, PlayStation fishing is finally here! Oh please, people are too hard on fishing games. These games can only ever do one thing well: offer a realistic fishing experience. If that's missing, it's over. With *Big Bass World Championship*, Hot-B once again proves where their experience lies. This game will leave a bad taste in your mouth the first time you see it in motion, but give it a try, like I did, and you'll be pleasantly surprised by the solid gameplay.

The first time I played *BBWC*, I thought to myself, "There's no way this is going to make it." The 3D engine is on par, or sub-par, with first generation PS 3D standards: clipping problems, polygonal break-up, and a poor frame rate. The fishermen are rendered, but for some strange reason there's glitchy spots floating all around them (I keep telling people it's them darn mosquitoes!). Even the CG, in the intro and intermissions, is basic, boring stuff. There you have it, the graphics aren't even a factor.

But I looked beyond all that, entered a tournament, and started fishing. I liked the control on the boat, and the casting system is accurate and well-implemented (as in: it takes skills). Reeling in fish is a special treat: For every pull on the line, you must counter in that same direction with a tug of your own. All of this goes down FAST, *and* you've got to keep an eye on the power meter of the fish in order to judge the reel-in (certain counter-tugs take off more energy). Very cool. You can also swap between over and underwater views, just in case you're using bobbing lures to entice the fishies.

Big Bass is very relaxing: ambient sound effects, rain, thunder, the works. There's plenty of tournaments, a free practice lake, and a perfect menu system (marred only by excessive loading). I'm glad I played this one enough to filter through the bad, and enjoy the good. You might do the same. ***JS***















R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - HOT B	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - HOT B	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



JACQUES STRAP
FFVII? WHO CARES? I'M GOIN' FISHIN'!









CHOOSE FROM EIGHT WORLD-CLASS FIGHTERS!!!



K1 THE ARENA FIGHTERS

In a world where wrestling, martial arts and so-called street fighting games comprise a major slice of the video game pie, it's amazing how few realistic simulations of legitimate hand-to-hand combat are actually available to gamers. The wrestling games—as well as the 3D arcade fighting games such as *Virtua Fighter* and *Tobal No. 1*,—have a serious problem for the purist. For one thing, they're based on an ersatz sport. Pro wrestling has been "worked" (ie, choreographed) for the vast majority of this century, evolving into a highly ritualized and undeniably athletic combination of stuntwork and soap opera.



The martial arts or street fighting contests rarely even attempt to imitate reality. In most cases, the *karate* and *kung fu* seen in video games are once-removed replications of the kind of *mano a mano* (ie, hand-to-hand) combat seen in chop-socky films. The punches are accompanied by cannon-like explosions, while the fighters can leap vast heights and distances and even hurl bolts of fire or other forces through the psychokinetic evocation of *chi*, energy which is said to be generated within the human body.

All of which is a pretty good distance from a sumo match or a kempo competition.

K-1: The Arena Fighters, on the other hand, is dripping with realism. Based on a first-rate Japanese game which was sold under the title *Fighting Illusion*, T•HQ picked up the license, then signed a deal with the prestigious K-1 kickboxing organization to use the K-1 tournament name and format. Then the publisher actually signed eight K-1 competitors, allowing gamers to use simulacra possessing the skill, style, strength and stamina of legit kickboxing stars Andy Hug, Ernesto Hoost, Mike Bernardo, Sam Greco, Musashi, Jerome Le Banner, Peter Aerts and Changpuek Kiatsongrit.





You want realism? Each of the fighters is outfitted with an on-screen fact sheet as well as a rotating, ray-traced three-dimensional body model and supplementary facial portrait. It can be played in one-player, two-player or tournament mode (with tournaments permitting human players to control up to all eight fighters). Other neat features include an auto-cam point of view which automatically adjusts to provide the optimal visual display; power meters which indicate the flow of momentum and the combatants' stamina; and a digital clock to track the three-minute rounds.





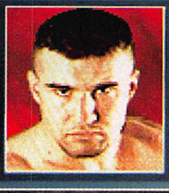
The play action is pretty smooth, though fighters tend to slide around the ring more than step and the graphics, while not loaded up with spectacular eye candy, are absolute meat-and-potatoes stuff. And don't try to turn this into a boxing match, at least not against a computer-controlled foe; punchers who can't do damage with their feet rarely make it past the first round (remember, in actual tournaments there is a mandatory minimum number of kicks which must be thrown in every round or the fighter forfeits points).

Are you r-r-r-r-ready to rumble? If so, *K-1: The Arena Fighters* will give you all you can handle. **BK**

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - XING	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - T•HQ	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



BILL KUNKEL
K1 is dripping with realism!



Virtua Fighter Coming to the PlayStation!?

In a startling turn of events, the current president of Bandai (and soon-to-be president of Sega-Bandai) commented in the February 6 issue of the Mainichi Shimbun, a well-respected Japanese newspaper, that Sega had obtained a license to develop a Virtua Fighter game for the PlayStation. "The new company's [Sega-Bandai's] policies," stated the president, "will completely change. For example, we have obtained a license to produce a *Virtua Fighter* on SCE's PlayStation. If Nintendo gives the OK, we'll produce one on the Nintendo 64 as well."

This is huge news if it proves true. Unfortunately, when Sega and Bandai were contacted directly about this matter, they staunchly denied it. They did, however, hint at the possibility of Sega making other PlayStation games: "Bandai is not going to release software exclusively for the Saturn. It's possible that Sega's titles may appear on PlayStation [from Bandai] and Bandai's PlayStation games may appear on Saturn."

Only time will tell. The Sega/Bandai merger is due for October, so don't expect any official announcements until then.

BioHazard 2 Delayed; Game To Be Released On 2 CDs

In a surprise announcement, Capcom of Japan has revealed that *BioHazard 2* is currently facing an almost total re-design, and will now arrive in late 1997 on 2 CDs! Why the changes? Apparently Capcom felt *BioHazard 2* was too similar to the original, and wanted to give players a more unique experience. They also mentioned a new aspect of the game called "Zapping", rumored to utilize the memory cards in some fashion.

Final Fantasy VII Breaks All Sales Records

Square's *Final Fantasy VII* sold through almost 2.4 million units in its first weekend on sale, effectively making it the fastest-selling game of all time. The vast majority of these sales were not through game shops, but rather convenience stores equipped with Square/Digicube's kiosks. This will come as quite a surprise to naysayers who claimed the convenience store plan just wouldn't work.

Capcom Prepares CyberBots Special Edition

Capcom of Japan is preparing a ¥7,800 special edition *CyberBots* package for Japanese release, of which there will be only 55,555 copies ever made. The special edition comes with the *CyberBots Secret File DX*, a 50-page hardcover art, CG, and comic book based on Capcom's popular freebie "Secret Files," the *Cyberbots Panorama Illustration*, a folding pop-up-book, and a specially packaged game case, CD and manual. The home version of *CyberBots* (as well as allowing you to use the arcade version's boss robots and characters) features an all-new, CG rendered character...: Zero Gouki. Zero Gouki is, obviously, a giant robot version of everyone's favorite Shotokan master. ZG comes with all his human counterpart's moves, including the Go Hadoken, Go Shoryuken, and Tatsumaki Zankuukyaku.

CyberBots is compatible with SNK's 8-Meg RAM cartridge (although not necessary to play the game, it adds more frames of animation) and will be released in Japan in March.

Ys VI...?!

Yes, it's true: Falcom has announced a new game in the critically acclaimed *Ys* series, *Ys Eternal*. There's just one catch: Falcom is going back to its roots, and *Eternal* will only be available for Japanese NEC PC-98X1 personal computers. *Ys Eternal* has no release date as of yet, and we can only hope and dream that Falcom announces it for a home console.

N64 Price Drop in Japan

Nintendo of Japan reported that their Nintendo 64 system will receive a price drop of 33% on March 14, lowering the machine's cost from ¥25,000 to ¥16,800 (approximately $204 to $137). Why the sudden reduction in price? According to Nintendo, high manufacturing volumes have resulted in a new lower price for semiconductors, but experts tell a very different story. Apparently Nintendo, with their lack of new games, is feeling the heat from Sega and Sony. N64's software sales currently comprise only 1-3% of the game weekly sales totals in Japan (with PlayStation game sales hovering around 45-60%), and the hardware's not doing much better. And while this new lower price might temporarily alleviate the slow system sales, it's safe to say that nothing will permanently change until more games are released.

Namco to Create Live Action Film!

While news of Namco working on CG films is nothing new, their latest movie project is something of a surprise. Simply labeled "Ai Suru" (To Love), Namco's new film announcement is not only based on a famous Japanese love story, it features live actors! That's right, Namco's making live action movies! Strange but true... More information as we get it!

Insanely Popular, Wacky Portable Simulation Game



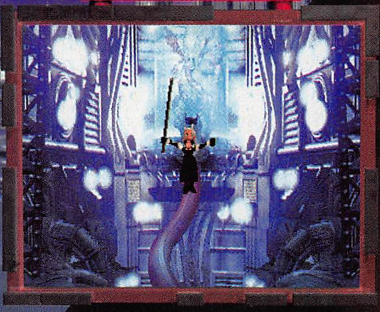
Bandai's new portable game is selling like hotcakes among female consumers. The game is called Tamagotch, and its name comes from "tamago" (which means "egg") and "watch." The interesting point of this game is that it is a portable simulation game for raising a chick-like creature. The manufacturer claims that it is a digital pet that came from outer space, and is not a chick. The little screen shows the process of its growth—an egg hatches, a chick comes out, grows, and lays eggs. The funny thing is that you have to take care of the chicks as if you were actually raising them. Otherwise, they die! The game is egg shaped and is about 4 cm x 3 cm; you can easily hold it in your hand. It sells for about 18 dollars in Japan.

Digital Idols Become Reality and Vice-Versa

Console game machines appear to be becoming the stage for singers. *Digital Dance Mix Vol. 1*, from Sega Enterprises, is a CD-ROM that features Namie Amuro's dancing and singing. Namie is currently one of the most popular female singers who can dance well while singing. You're probably picturing something like MTV-style video footage on CD-ROM, but your expectations are wrong: This CD-ROM contains 3-D graphics of her—a virtual Namie Amuro. You'll soon forget that this is a virtual idol once you take a look at it, since her movement is so realistic. This is because Namie's moves were motion-captured and processed by Sega's AM2. Now, if you just wanted to watch Namie's dancing, you could just buy a video tape, but there is a function that you can never use on a VCR or LD player: You have 360° camera control, zoom-in and out, and bottom-up angles. The CD-ROM is distributed only in convenience stores, is priced at ¥2,800 and contains two songs plus four different mini-games.

On the contrary, a digital idol has found her way into reality. Shiori Fujisaki, who is a character in the Konami game called *Tokimeki Memorial*, recently released her debut album, *My Sweet Valentine*. "When the person in charge of production asked me to compose songs for an idol, Shiori Fujisaki, I didn't know either Shiori or *Tokimeki Memorial*. When I found out that Shiori is not human but a virtual idol, I was surprised," says well-known song writer, Kazuo Zaitsu.

IS *FINAL FANTASY VII* THE MOST INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE THE WORLD OF VIDEO GAMES HAS EVER OFFERED?

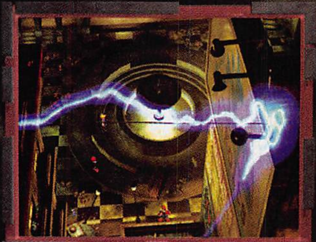


The Bible, penicillin, the radio, television, the polio vaccine, Ford's original Model-T, Cabbage Patch Kids, Tickle-Me-Elmos, Nintendo 64's (ha!), Pat Boone's chart-toppin' masterpiece "In a Metal Mood"; All of these items proved to be historical consumer successes, but none of them sold two million units in a single weekend. None of them got approximately 1.7% of an industrialized nation's population out-of-bed and into long lines at convenience stores on a weekend. No, none of these items came close to equalling the success of *Final Fantasy VII*, a game that just happens to be the *fastest-selling item in history.* Okay, sure, I just made that up. But the scary thing is that it might actually be true. Can you think of any consumer product that's sold that well in a weekend?



Cloud Strife





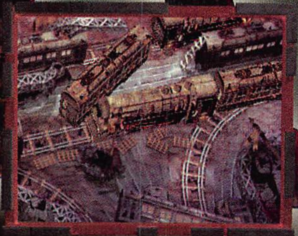


FINAL FANTASY VII

Now, I'm not saying that the release of *Final Fantasy VII* is the most important event in human history. There are some very nice things about penicillin, for example. I just want you to know what we're dealing with here. This review isn't a matter of "should you buy *Final Fantasy*," because you should (and you will). And if this review dwells a bit much on the game's negatives, you mustn't think that these problems, although major, can come anywhere close to overbalancing the game's stunning positives—*FFVII* is quite possibly the finest video game ever made. So the topic of this review, in light of the year of anticipation, the broken sales records, and all the media hype, is: "Is any game worth all of that?" And that's a trickier question to answer.







One simply can't exaggerate when discussing the scope of *Final Fantasy VII*... You don't have to see the list of 300+ names in the credits to realize that the budget of this game probably exceeds the budget of the 2nd most expensive game ever by a factor of ten. Outside of the battles, overhead map and mini games, every screen of the game was pre-rendered to a degree of visual quality that's never come close to being achieved before in the video game industry. And believe it or not, there's nearly fifty hours of this beauty, with no two locations looking even similar, and few occasions in which you have to backtrack. When you toss in the real time battles with their stunning backgrounds, dazzling spell effects, ultra-realistic character motion, and unprecedented enemy variety and design, there's no denying that this is the most beautiful game ever made. By far.

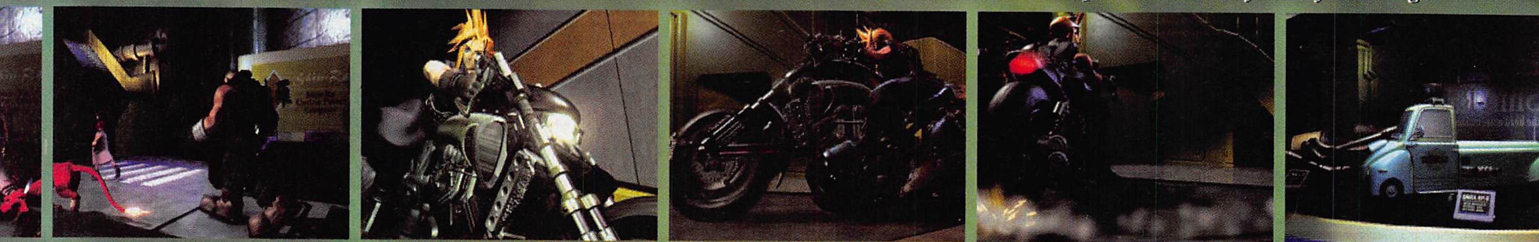


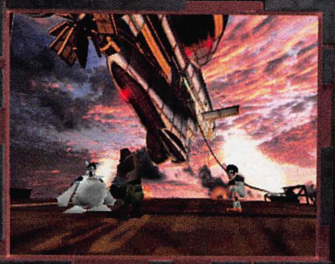




Of course, it's the storyline that makes an RPG (or so conventional wisdom goes), and *FFVII*'s plot is almost as revolutionary as its graphics.

"...stunning backgrounds, dazzling spell effects, ultra-realistic character motion, and unprecedented enemy variety and design!"








No one loves *FF 1-6* more than I, but it's no secret that their storylines were written with the pre-teen audience in mind. The influence of Director Yoshinori Kitasei made *FFVI*'s storyline far more memorable than previous games, but it has nothing on *FFVII*... Square has clearly turned their sights towards older gamers, and the result is a storyline so complex, powerful, and unexpected that even the briefest of plot summaries would ruin dozens of stunning plot twists. It's true that the writers completely drop the ball near the end of the game, but even at its worst, *FFVII*'s story is a world apart from the cliche'd drivel we've come to expect from video game storylines.

The beautiful graphics and brilliant storyline come together in a way you have to experience to understand... Remember the Opera House from *FFVI*? Of course you do. Now imagine a game in which *every single scene* is the Opera House. And that right there is reason enough to make *FFVII* the crowning exhibit in the video game hall of fame (viewable in my house by appointment only, $6.00 for adults, half price for seniors and children under 12). Everything else—the cool battles, the amazing FMV, the dozens of cool mini games, the hours of optional quests, Nobuo Uematsu's characteristically excellent soundtrack—that's all just a nice bonus.

Continued on the next page...






Barret Wallace

FANTASY FACTS - THE MATERIA SYSTEM...

As intrepid FF'ers know, every Final Fantasy has a new "system" in the battles. IV saw the birth of the "Active Time Battles," V had the brilliant "Job System," VI had the ho-hum "Accessory System," and VII has... (dramatic pause) the "Materia System."





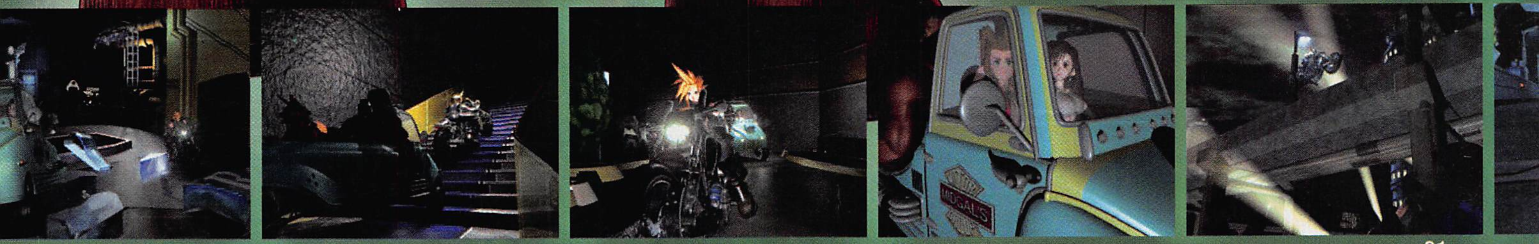


For the first time in an FF game, no characters have any special abilities or magics, except for their own limit breaks. Instead, the magics, abilities, call spells and special attributes are all sealed inside little Makoro-produced crystals called "Materia." These fit into slots on your weapons, and give you all sorts of things... a call spell, the ability to steal, an entire family of magical spells (like all three thunder spells, or cure spells, or whatever), the ability to learn spells from enemies, HP bonuses, increased luck, all sorts of things. Other Materia, when placed in adjoining slots with certain other materia, change that materia's attributes. For example, a spell that once targeted only one ally or enemy can be made to target all your enemies.

The Materia go up levels as you gain Ability Points, which come along with XP at the end of battles. Certain armors and weapons double, or even triple the rate at which your Materia grow, and some weapons and armors don't let them grow at all. Which is a shame, because if you use that equipment, you'll never get to "Master" your materia, which causes the little guys to reproduce themselves in a sudden fit of sexual passion.

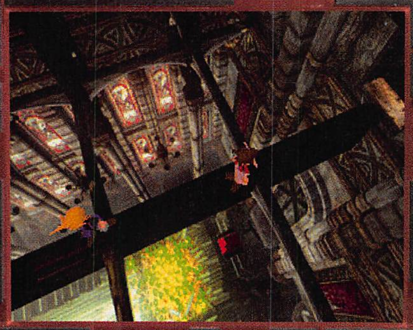
"...the magics, unique abilities, call spells and special attributes are all sealed inside little Makoro-produced crystals called MATERIA."







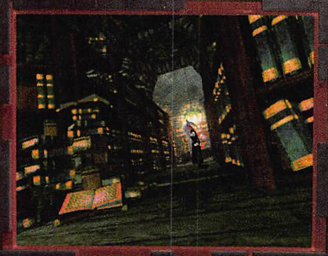



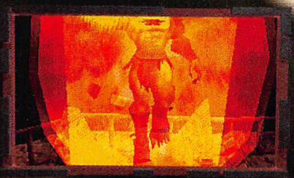
Unfortunately, *Final Fantasy VII* is not without its flaws. There are a few small ones: The way your character gets lost in the sometimes confusing backdrops, and the way you have to be constantly re-equipping your Materia when you change characters, for example. And there are a few big ones.

The first big one is the difficulty. In their quest to reach out for a new, older fan base, Square abandoned the challenging nature of previous *Final Fantasy* titles, creating the first *FF* that could conceivably be beaten without ever dying. I never once paused to slaughter for experience, and after dying only once (in a completely optional subquest), got through the entire rest of the game with little difficulty. The many optional subquests that I didn't even take the first time through could only have made me stronger, and anyone who completes all of them would have the resources necessary (in the form of a very nasty call spell) to kill the last boss in a single shot. In a *Final Fantasy* game, this is nearly inexecusable. I sincerely hope the difficulty will be raised in the American version (Then they even could sell that version in Japan as *Final Fantasy VII - Hard Type*!)

The other problem is that even with the game's two month delay, the last five-to-ten hours seem horribly rushed. The storyline









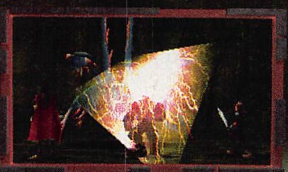
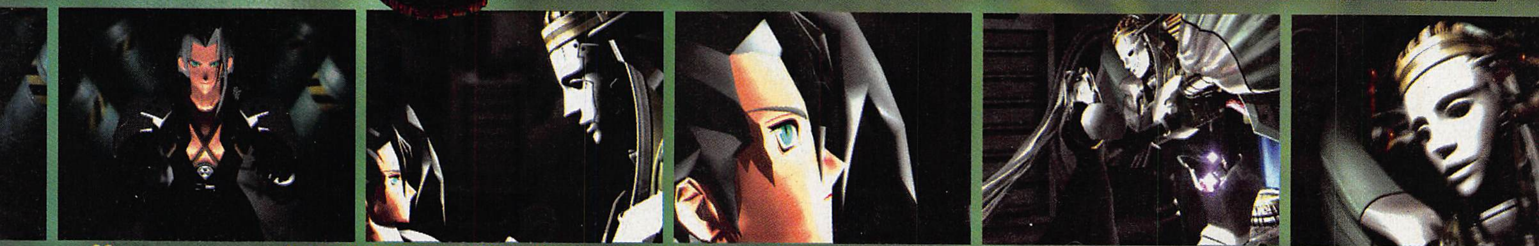




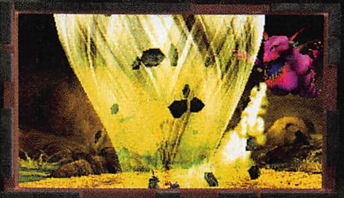
Aerith Gainsborough

Stunning battle sequences feature a whole army of superbly-designed and expertly animated creatures. Prepare for a visual masterpiece!








falls apart near the end, the last dungeon completely sucks, and the game's many subplots and supporting characters have either disappointing resolutions or no resolutions at all. While the last bosses, last boss music and ending are all very impressive, the last five or ten hours can't come close to capturing the genius of the first forty. It makes you wonder if there were some really cool parts that were cut from the original plans when Square ran out of time. Square's obvious haste in completing the game could also have been one of the reasons for its unfortunate lack of difficulty.




Although flawed, the worst thing I can say about *Final Fantasy VII* is that it's a twenty out of ten that could have been a thirty out of ten. This is still the most incredible experience the world of video gaming has to offer. So in the final analysis, yeah, it is worth all of that. ***Takuhi***






FANTASY FACTS - THE CALL SPELL...

Without a doubt, the greatest graphical extravagance to behold are the Call Spells. Square's imagination and research into mythology have combined to produce some of the most spectacular incantations ever seen! Amazing PlayStation visuals are called forth!

Call Spells are now only available through Materia, and each of the Call Spell Materia that you equip take away a hefty chunk of your HP. Still worth it? You better believe it, honey! The call spells are more powerful than ever before, and more importantly, they're possibly the most beautiful things in the game. Anyone who was blown away by the Leviathan call spell in the Tobal No. 1 demo has a little surprise coming, as that was one of the worst of the lot. You just have to see these things to believe 'em.

The 20 call spells in FFVII bring back a lot of old Final Fantasy favorites (including three different Bahamuts!), but also introduce a lot of new soon-to-be-legendary monsters to the series, including Kujata, Knights of the Round, and Hades.










Summon the might of legend's darkest creations to smite your foes before you! Bahamut, Efreet, Titan, Leviathan, Ramuh, Hades, Phoenix, Odin and others await your call!













MORE GREAT SCENES FROM FINAL FANTASY VII...








Mind-blowing cut scenes highlight your adventure! The story unfolds through awesome CG movies that will blow you away!







FANTASY FACTS - THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM...

You won't just be tramping over tundra on foot. Oh no. As you'd probably guess by now, the designmeisters at Square have invented some truly spectacular (and wacky) new forms of transport to traverse the map sections of the game. Newer vehicles can even reach otherwise unobtainable areas...

In addition to the usual assortment of Chocobos, submarines, and airships, FFVII has a couple of cool new vehicles, including a shot-down airplane that can do little more than skim around on shallow water, an all-terrain buggy which is able to traverse deserts and rivers to reach new islands, and crazy Chocobos that can run straight up cliffs, walk on water, and turns rocks into bread! Ha ha! I'm kidding about that last one of course. You see, I said that because they can walk on water. Get it?

Um, anyway, you can also drive motorcycles, snowboards, and Chocobos in the various mini-games. Displayed in 3D, these 'race' sequences make a nice break from the intensity of the storyline, and are very, very cool.







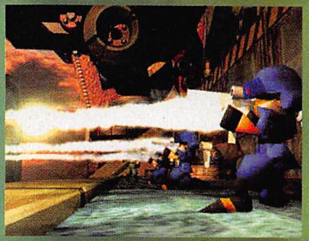


Vincent Valentine





















FANTASY FACTS - THE LIMIT BREAK...

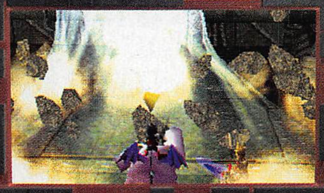
Final Fantasy VII also utilizes the new Limit Break system. These are basically a set of awesome special attacks which are unique to a particular character. Not even the mighty incantations of the Call Spells can match a fully powered Limit Break attack!

Almost every character in Final Fantasy VII has four levels of Limit Break, built up throughout the game. When you first start your epic quest, your characters only have a single level one 'break,' and each subsequent level of Limit Break offers two more attacks. When engaged in combat, you can only release your Limit Break when your gauge reaches full power, and this gauge is built up after every hit you take (kind of like a "fury-ometer"). Select your type of Limit Break wisely however; you cannot change it mid-battle!

Cid Highwind



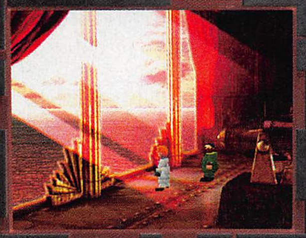


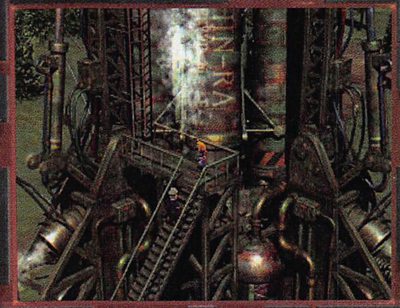


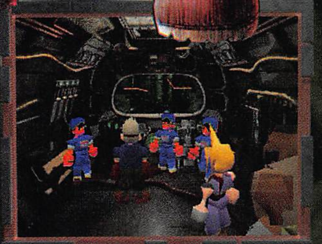


Take too many hits and your party will reach their Limit Break attack! Special powers that can destroy your enemies or heal your party!





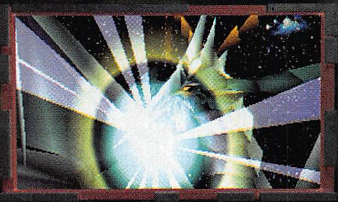




Our epic quest has ended. But yours shall begin shortly. In September to be exact, when the official version of the game is released. GameFan would advise waiting for the official version; not least because everything will be in English and therefore a lot more enjoyable! Return to us then, and read the definitive review, gasp at the even greater selection of amazing screenshots, and gawk as we reveal even more!















HEY READERS! COME BAC' IN 6 MONTHS AND READ OUR REVIEW OF THE OFFICIAL FINAL FANTASY VII WHEN IT IS RELEASED IN SEPTEMBER! UNTIL THEN...ZZZZ...ZZZ...





HIGH INTENSITY SHOOTING FOR YOUR PLAYSTATION STRAIGHT FROM THE ARCADE! TAITO'S RAYSTORM IS AMAZING!

REVIEW

PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - TAITO
- PUBLISHER - TAITO
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
- AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



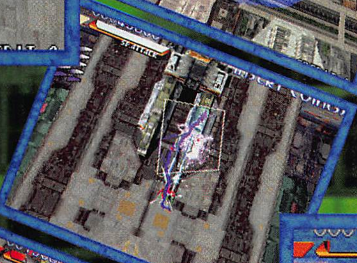
E. STORM
HIGH POWERED SHOOTING RETURNS!



Once upon a time there were so many shooters that one could find cartridges wedged under doors or balancing out wobbly home furnishings. Whip Rush, ThunderForce 1,2,3&4, Wings of Wor, Truxton, Forgotten Worlds, Musha, Gaires, Curse, Darius, Phelios, Raiden, Steel Empire, Vapor Trail, Galaxy Force 2, Bio Hazard, SubTerrania, Insector X, Hellfire, Super Fantasy Zone, Granada, Atomic Robo Kid, Panorama Cotton, Silpheed, SolFeace, VeryTex, Grey Lancer, Arrow Flash, Heavy Unit, Thunderblade, Space Harrier, After Burner, Zero Wing, Space Mega Force, Axelay, StarFox, Super EDF, Phalanx, Aero Blaster, UN Strike, Gradius, Gates of Thunder, Dead Moon, Download, Soldier Blade, Spriggan, and Air Zonk come immediately to mind when I think back to those glorious times when the SNES, Genesis, and TurboGrafx (god I miss NEC) were dueling it out simultaneously. They did over-do it on the shooters, though. But did they to the point where developers have become so wary of them that they may become an endangered species here in the US?

Acclaim has shown they've got the mettle to bring over the very best and so I wonder, could RayStorm be on their '97 ticket? If it is, watch out, because this is the shooter from which all 32-bit shooters will be measured in the future. (cont'd. p. 98)





ARCADE MODE VS. PS MODE














YOU ARE THE EARTH'S LAST HOPE

AUGUST 4, 2219
ALBION D.U.
EARTH





AUGUST 5, 2219
OLD GAUL CITY
EARTH



AUG. 5, 2219
3RD FLEET
EARTH ORBIT





AUG. 5
2219
PALMYRA
VALLEY
EARTH





AUG.
6, 2219
CARTHAGE BASE
SECILIA ORBIT



AUG. 6,
2219
ETRURIA
SECILIA





AUGUST 7, 2219
JUDA CENTRAL
SYSTEM
SECILIA



AUG. 8, 2219
JUDA BASE
FINAL
CONFLICT









BLAZING EFFECTS FILL THE SCREEN!





BOSS
ENCOUNTERS!
FURIOUS
MACHINES
AWAIT
YOUR
PRESENCE













IF YOU BUY ONE SHOOTER THIS YEAR...





RayStorm did well in Japanese arcades and even appeared here in selected high dollar locales as a 50-cents-per-play piece. Somehow, Taito has not only duplicated the original perfectly, but managed to squeeze in a PlayStation special version as well!

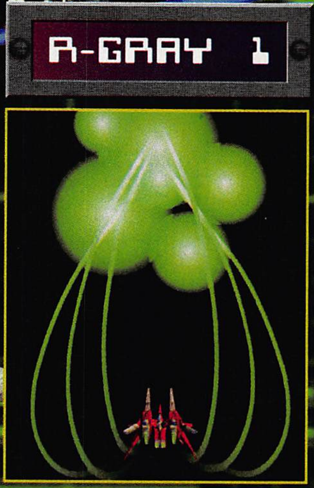
The best way to describe RayStorm in terms of appearance is Axelay meets Silpheed. Except RayStorm, unlike Silpheed (which I loved), is a real time polygonal game, where Silpheed's polys were stored as FMV. The graphics are absolutely gorgeous and the frame rate is stunning, ranging between 30 & 60 fps with hordes of enemies





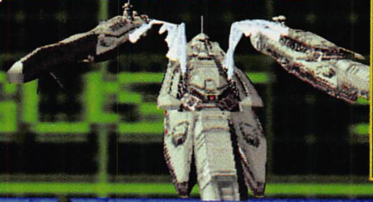












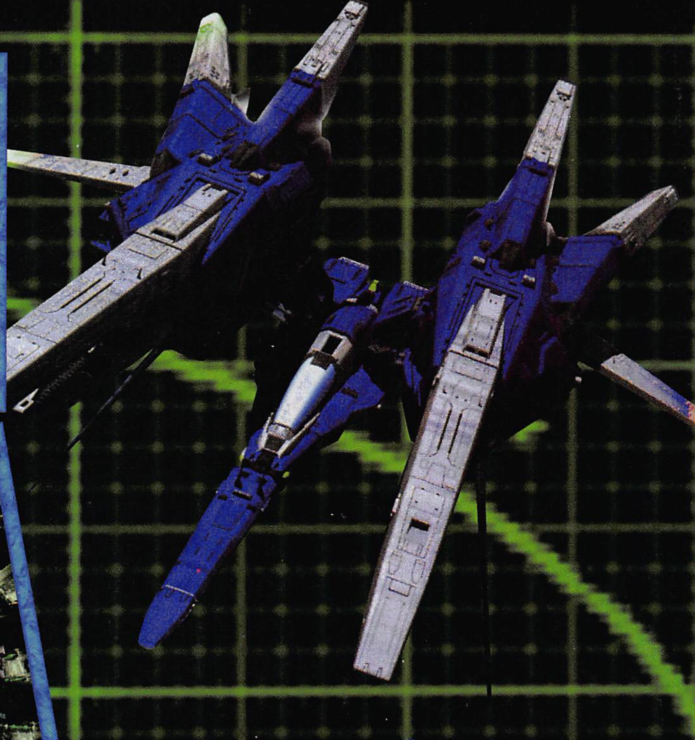


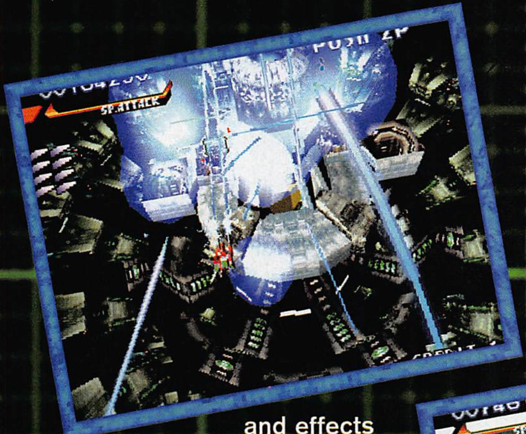















...MAKE IT RAY STORM!

and effects on screen. You're hard pressed to find a single moment when some blazing effect isn't on screen and the camera work is second to none. The bosses are huge, mobile, and highly detailed beasts which pulse with life and dish out explosive attacks. Each is an inspired work. As for the music, well, ZTT (Zuntata) has outdone themselves. Buy the soundtrack if you listen to game music CDs.

And finally RayStorm supports 2-player gameplay, should you choose to recruit a friend. Simply put, it doesn't get much better for shooter fans. We'll keep an eye out for a US version; in the meantime, the import's out there now. Personally, I wouldn't wait on this one. ***ES***

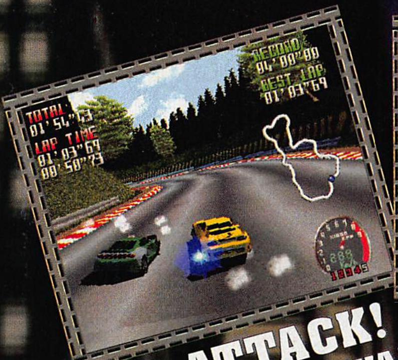






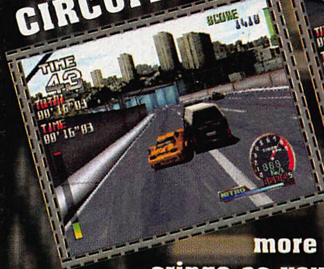









TIME ATTACK!
CHOOSE YOUR RIVAL AND HIT THE ROAD!
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO KILL?
CIRCUIT · FREEWAY · MOUNTAIN · KAISER'S ROAD



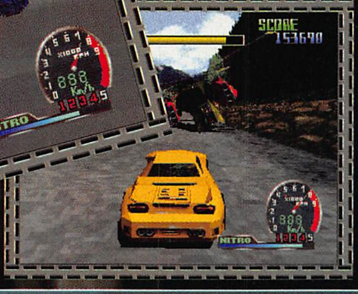




I'm going to say something that may make more than a few of you cringe as you hearken back to that matinee of bad game theatre... Chase.... HQ! There, I said it. Now for the good news. While Ray Tracers is a sequel of sorts to that long lost stink-o-rama it has gone through a complete metamorphosis. Chunky sprites have become smooth, texture-mapped polygons, rancid tunes have become luscious melodies from ZTT (Zuntata), and boring end bosses have gone from cars just like yours to huge mech-style beasties that fire smoking projectiles and animate with stunning realism. Besides these 6 levels of high speed burning carnage, RT features a Time Trial Mode where you can either choose a rival or simply go for the record. I think it's safe to say that Chase HQ is dead, while the concept lives on in pure PlayStation splendor. Now let's see, I've got a bunch more space to fill and I've pretty much said what needs to be said. Hmm, let me see... Oh yeah, here's something cool. The courses are no longer simply long stretches of boring highway, no sir. Now, in many instances you'll break through barriers or veer off into grassy canyons, sewers, underground tunnels, and other such diverse terrain. As you speed towards the climactic end battle, enemy vehicles surround you at every turn. You can either pass them, (attempt to at least), or, by ramming into them, cause them to explode which results in impressive pyrotechnics. Depending how fast you complete each course, your time is allotted to destroy the boss. Save your turbos—in Ray Tracers, the enemy is quite intelligent. The

RAY TRACERS™





R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - TAITO	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - TAITO	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



E. STORM
THE CLASSIC *HQ* REINCARNATED MAKES THE OLD ONE LOOK ANCIENT!







Huge foes await! Ramming Speed! Go baby go! Yudaman!



game moves along at a blistering frame rate, by the way; in fact, it may be the fastest in its class, and a large class that is. So if you're looking for a little import flavor in your PS arsenal by all means, have a look at Taito's latest. They are quickly emerging as a top PS developer. Wait 'til you see Ray Storm (pg. 97). Oh my. I can't wait to see what they come up with next! *ES*





JAPAN NOW

Mountain Pass Fastest Drift Master (a rough translation of the title) is coming to the US under the moniker of *Peak Performance* featuring Pikes Peak hillclimb for PlayStation. If you've always wanted to power slide your way around twisting mountain roads, Atlus has got a game for you.

For starters, you have a wonderful assortment of cars to choose from—over 20 in all. And aside from a few highly specialized vehicles like a stadium truck and a racing spec Viper, high performance Japanese cars flesh out the remaining selections. Now you can finally blast through winding mountain roads in the raucous Japanese market-specific Nissan Skyline or Eunos Roadster. All of the cars are wonderfully modeled and shaded and truly resemble their real life counterparts. Most astounding however, is the amount of detail in each car's interior. You can actually see your little guy inside shifting. Get the car sideways enough and you'll even see him flinging the wheel around like a madman. I was impressed when I first saw those little diamond-headed guys inside the car in *Sega Rally* for Saturn, but this takes it to a whole new level.












Outside the car, things remain fairly impressive. Trackside detail is good, the 3D engine is fast and smooth and there's only the slightest pop-up. And, as the name implies, you'll be driving on some fantastic courses that undulate and twist their way around mountains. On top of that, the courses themselves are extremely long.

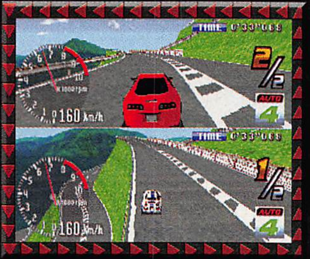
As for the play mechanics, the title says it all; prepare to drift. And why not? It's a total blast and executed very well in this game. Yank the hand brake and watch as the tail end of your car breaks loose and you fly around a corner. Good fun, indeed. The computer is relatively easy to beat, but it is the plethora of options that gives *Peak Performance* its longevity. There are five courses to choose from, each with the option to race them forward, backward, at night, in the afternoon, or at sunset. In two player mode, you can race with a horizontal or vertical split screen, both with very good frame rates. There is a time trial mode and even a gymkhana course where you can set up your own cones and weave between them. Finally, there is the amusing story mode, (which will be excised from the US version) wherein you go one on one against a trash talking, cigarette-smoking rival.

Add the wealth of options to the nicely done visuals and you have a fine racing title. The domestic version should be out as you read this, so if you like your racing heavy on the drifting, you'll totally dig this. SD



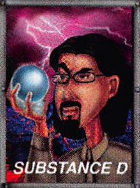






Developer: CAVE
Publisher: ATLUS
Released: NOW





天外魔境 第四の黙示録 The Apocalypse IV



Developer: Red
Publisher: Hudson
Released: 01/14/97



Takuhi

The *Tengai Makyo* series has the distinct honor of being the only major Japanese RPG series that has never been translated into English. As excellent as this series is, we rarely cover it for just that reason. But this time, I just couldn't resist, as the setting for this installment (full title: *Tengai Makyo: The Fourth Revelation: The Apocalypse IV*) is none other than the history of this great land we call (sniff!)... America! Sort of.

Past *Tengai Makyo* games were based on the writings of an apparently fictional Westerner and his unlearned impressions of late 19th century Japan. This time, the roles are reversed, and the developers made *TM:TFR:TA4* based on their own clouded ideas of American history and geography.

And so what if all the dates are completely wrong, and both Seattle and Portland are neighboring cities in that most Northwestern of states, Montana? That's half the charm. *TM:TFR:TA4* has a very cool storyline, with an interesting mix of hilarious hijinks and occasionally serious plot points based on the Bible's Book of Revelations.

As a game, *Tengai Makyo*'s strongest point is its video quality. The animation in this game is all full screen, 30fps, and with none of that chunky Cinepak screen garbage (although miraculously, it *is* Cinepak). This video is, astonishingly, better than the PlayStation's best, even though in every single previous game, the Saturn has lagged far behind in video quality.

The battles are impressive, with full screen enemies that look great, but could stand a few more frames of animation. Unfortunately, the overheads are disappointing, with simplistic visuals and bland colors reminiscent of PC edutainment titles. While it's cool to be visiting such actual locations as New Orleans, Phoenix, New York and Hollywood, the game would be much more enjoyable if they didn't look so bland.

The mixture of stereotyped American history and biblical imagery is a guarantee that *TM:TFR:etc., etc.* will never make its way to the states. But import buyers might enjoy this one as both a pretty good RPG and a fascinating cultural curiosity.

T

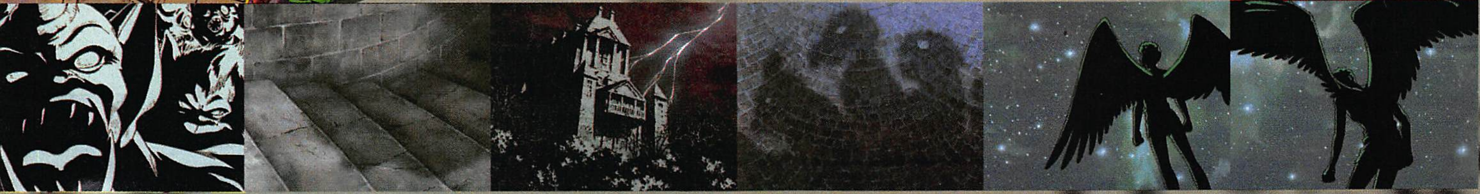




Full screen battles, with Hudson's astounding "High-Brid™" animation!







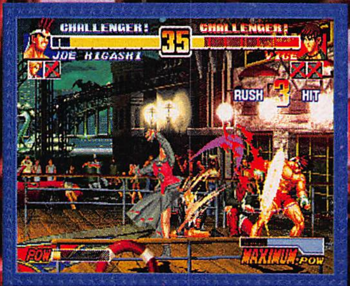
THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES... A POWERFUL ORGANIZATION CHALLENGES THE GREATEST WARRIORS IN THE WORLD TO DETERMINE JUST WHO IS...

THE KING OF Fighters '96



TEAM EDIT ALLOWS FOR HUNDREDS OF FIGHTER COMBINATIONS! CHOOSE FROM SNK'S BIGGEST STARS AND CREATE THE ULTIMATE TEAM!

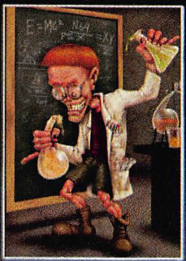


PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

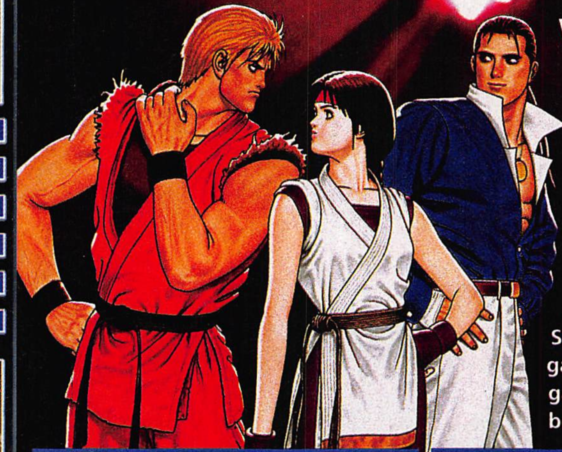
- DEVELOPER - SNK
- PUBLISHER - SNK
- FORMAT - CD + RAM CART
- \# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
- AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



SHIDOSHI
COME BACK WHEN YOU GROW UP!





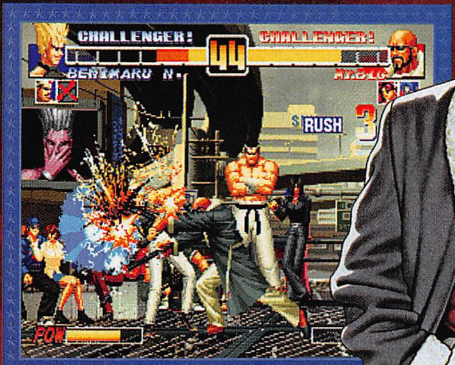


With Rugal defeated in the previous year's tournament, it seems the King of Fighters competition may no longer go on. A young woman named Kagura Chizuru, however, steps up and announces that she will host it herself. Kagura guards an ancient evil power known as 'Orochi,' and she is on a quest to find the strongest warriors in the world to help her protect it from Goenitz. Goenitz is one of four Orochi 'Elementalists,' and wishes to release the mystical energy so that he can use it to conquer the world.

Thus opens SNK's latest fighting game, *King of Fighters '96*. I awaited this one with excitement, not only because I'm a huge SNK fan, but because *KOF '95* is still one of my favorite 2D fighting games. Yet, I did have one reservation: In all of SNK's fighting game series, the third title has always been a very poor game. This being the third *KOF*, I was a bit worried.



















Thankfully, my fear was for no reason. *KOF '96* is an exceptional game, and a solid progression of the series. Play control is very close to '95, yet with little modifications to balance out game-play. Changes range from giving short attacks more of a delay, to replacing the 'background dodge' ability with a somewhat less cheesy roll. Some existing characters get new moves, or tweaks of their old ones, and as always, a new bunch of participants show up for this year's competition. Making an appearance are Kasumi and Mr. Big from *Art of Fighting*, Geese Howard and Wolfgang Krause from *Fatal Fury*, and original characters Mature, Vice, and Leona, among others. Most of the new characters are great additions (except for Kasumi), yet I'm a bit upset at some of the decisions concerning who was taken out to make room (they should've kept Billy!).

Graphic quality and detail is at its usual high level, and many returning characters were given new standing poses and animation (and if you thought Mai couldn't get any, er, 'bouncier,' just wait until you see her).



Backgrounds range from the simply okay, to the absolutely amazing: two notable stages are the streets of Osaka with its cars zooming by and huge monitors playing clips of animation, and the stadium with its roaring crowd and onlookers walking around wearing huge heads depicting their favorite fighters.

So how does the Saturn version compare to the original arcade and Neo•Geo cart versions? Very well, thanks in part to the RAM cart that SNK has produced. The only real disappointment is the character samples, which are a little muffled and soft. Still, it's a fabulous translation, and excusable when you see all of the animation and background detail. And, remember, *KOF '95* had its own specialized RAM cart, and its background music wasn't redbook audio as it is in '96. On a side note, SNK has started doing with its Saturn games what it does with its Neo•Geo games: There is an English option which allows you to play the game fully in English. A wonderful option, especially considering it's rather unlikely we'll see this game in America anytime soon.

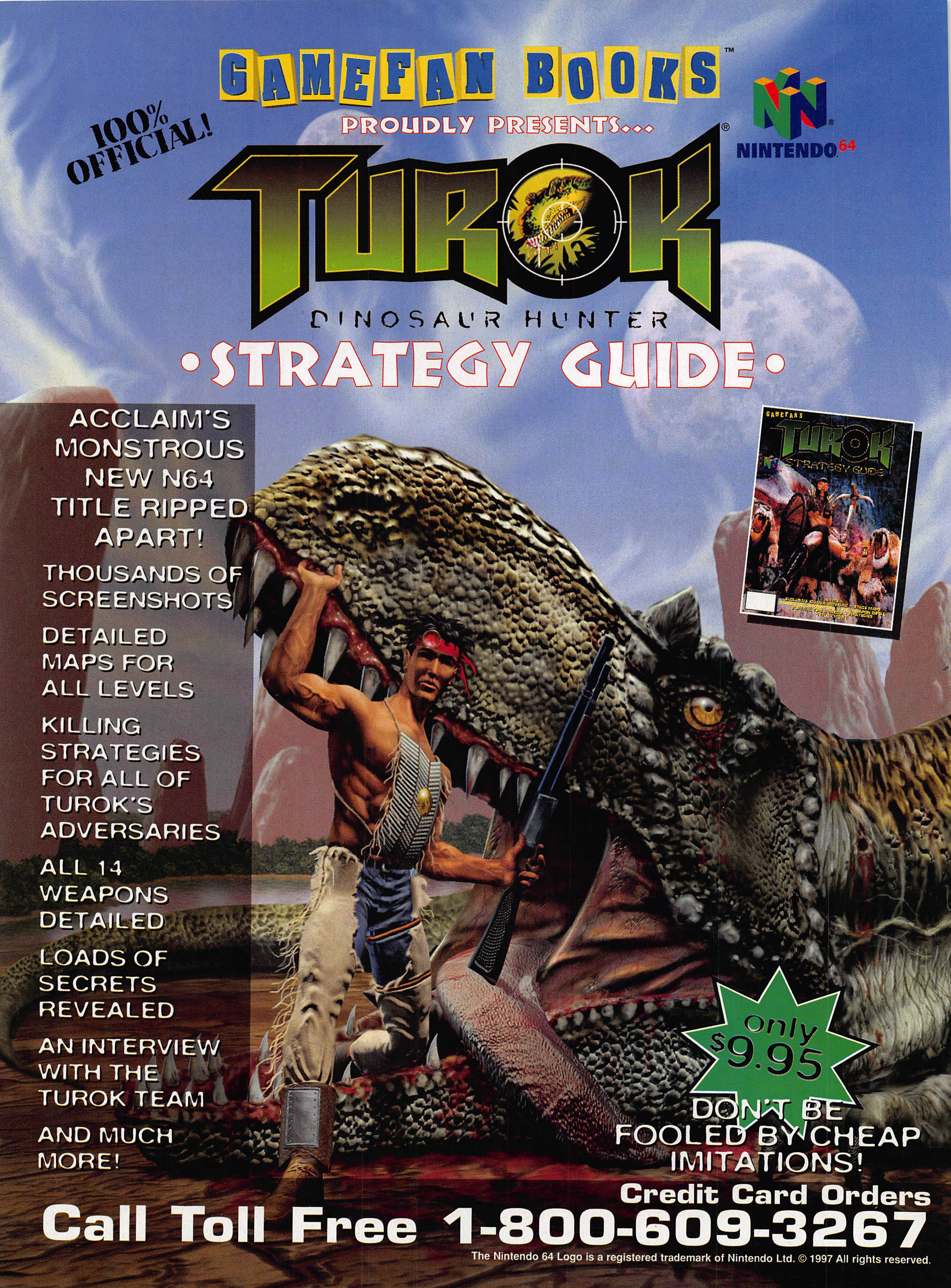
Thankfully, while it seems that, day by day, 2D fans like Nick Rox and myself are becoming extinct, companies like SNK still care about us. *King of Fighters '96* is a top-quality fighting game, and is not only a must for all SNK fans out there who don't own a Neo•Geo or Neo•CD, but for all fighting game fans as well. S











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Psychic Warlock Assassin Taromaru

FROM JAPAN COMES A HEAVY DOSE OF SATURN 2D POWER... BUT WILL THIS MYSTIC DEFENDER EVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY IN AMERICA?




Fond memories of the classic Mystic Defender (an early Genesis masterpiece) came screaming to mind the first time I laid eyes on TWI's Psychic Warlock. It wasn't until playing it however, that I realized this could easily be considered that game's sequel, should Sega wrap it up for a domestic release. Don't hold your breath though, I doubt SOA knows it exists. The game was produced by the unlikeliest of companies, Time Warner Interactive... Japan. And even if they did, a game dealing with such dark themes would likely be turned away. Here it is, though, for your viewing pleasure, a hot 2.5D game for the Saturn, made up primarily of beautifully textured polygons and bursting with inspired special effects. Literally everything you see, except for the distant horizon and the characters, is polygonal. The Saturn's 2D engine is indeed a screamer. 50,000 were produced before TWI Japan ceased operations. A fitting swan song, indeed.










REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

- DEVELOPER - TIME WARNER
- PUBLISHER - TIME WARNER
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
- AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



E. STORM
THE SATURN FLEXES ITS 2D MUSCLE.













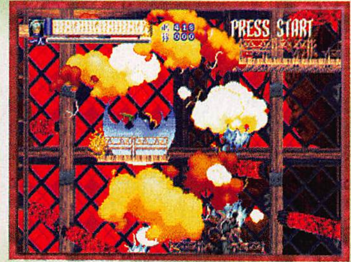


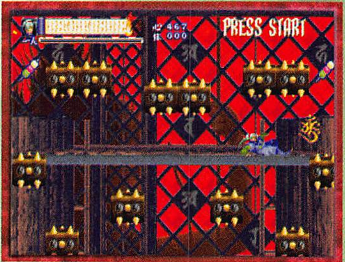






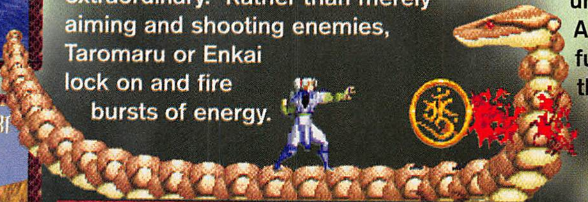








The gameplay in PW may appear basic, but it's actually quite extraordinary. Rather than merely aiming and shooting enemies, Taromaru or Enkai lock on and fire bursts of energy.

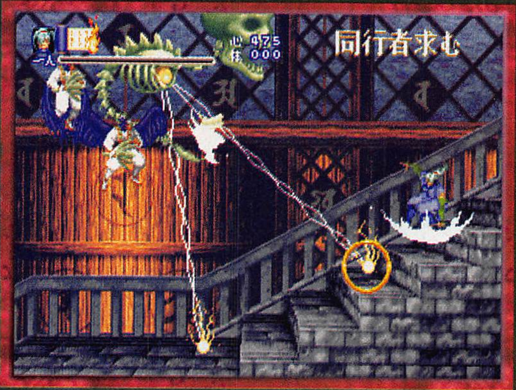


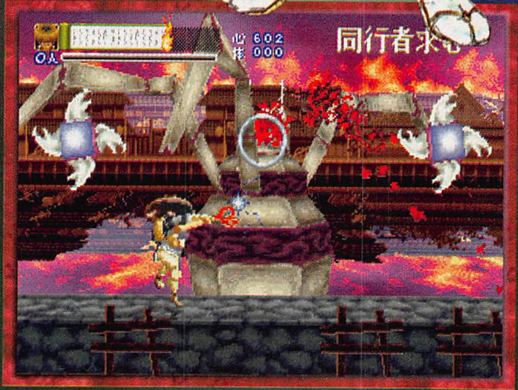
This energy can be accumulated by holding down the attack button and unleashed upon releasing. A full charge sends a furious stream of death through every living soul. You can block enemy attacks

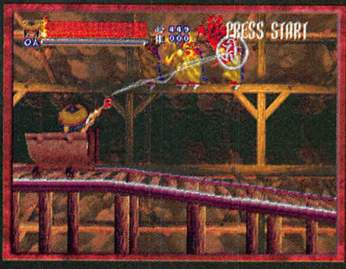


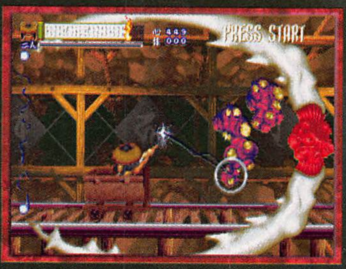


























POLYGONAL STRUCTURES ROTATE SEAMLESSLY AS YOU PASS













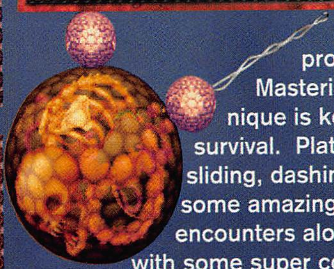






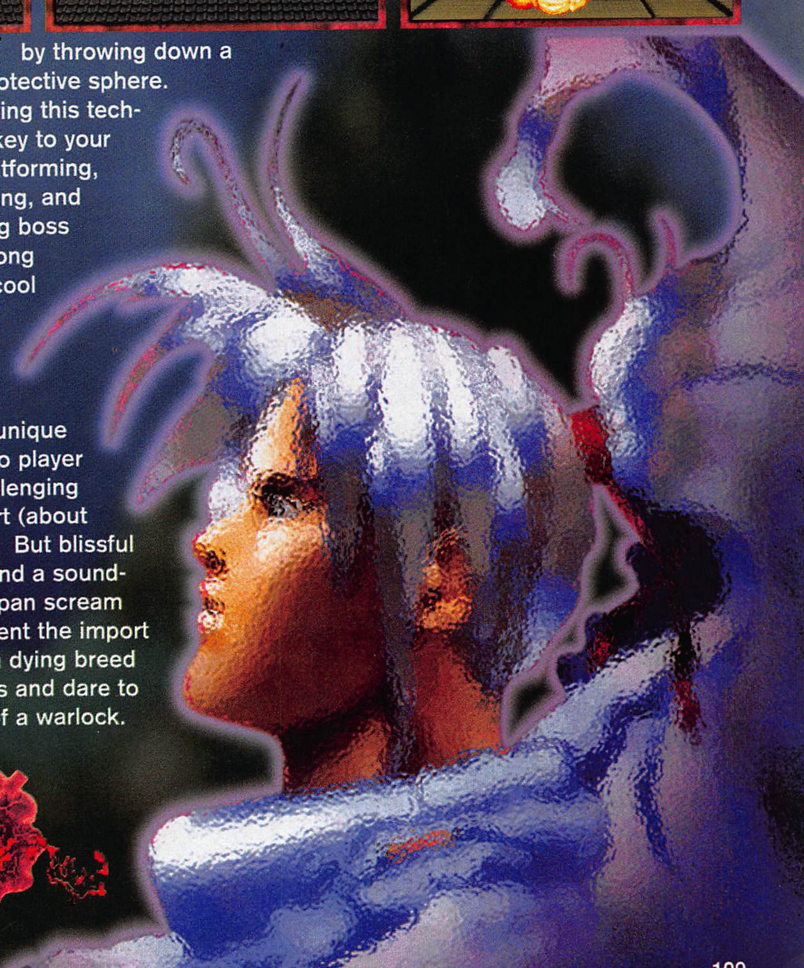






by throwing down a protective sphere. Mastering this technique is key to your survival. Platforming, sliding, dashing, and some amazing boss encounters along with some super cool level design garnish the feast. It's hardly ever straight walk and shoot, and when it is, it's intense. All this, combined with the unique attack mechanism and a two player mode makes for a very challenging and entertaining, albeit short (about an hour and change) game. But blissful graphics, fresh gameplay, and a soundtrack right out of ancient Japan scream play me again. If you frequent the import market, add this legacy of a dying breed to your quiver of games and dare to walk in the sandals of a warlock.





OTHER STUFF

SEGA SATURN 2 NEWS AND SPECS!

Ok, first things first. Although these specs came from a reliable source (a top Sega developer who recently received a Saturn 2 development station), they may change in the months leading up to Saturn 2's official announcement. Having said that, the specs are current as of this month, and we knew you'd want to know them...

The first revelation about the Saturn 2 (the name will change) is that the machine will once again be CD-based. Sega wants a 12x speed CD Rom to minimize loading, along with between 8 to 16 megabytes of RAM (yet to be decided)—an unprecedented amount of memory for a videogame console. The machine will be powered by a Hitachi 64-bit CPU (rumored to run at speeds of 150 MHz) and come complete with a 64-bit graphics chip based on a current PC 3D accelerator card called the Monster 3D. The sound chip is said to be a Creative Labs AWE 32, a high-end PC sound card that is actually used by musicians to mix tunes!

The Saturn 2 is currently scheduled for a Sept. 1998 release date in Japan, with a US launch shortly afterwards. The price being quoted at the moment is between $250 to $350 (in Japan) though that may change. All internal Sega development teams have taken delivery of their development systems already, and Sega has told them that they must have their launch games ready by no later than August 1998. We have no news yet on what those launch titles might be, but either an enhanced *VF3* or possibly even *VF4* is likely.

SATURN NEWS

Unfortunately, Sega will NOT be releasing Warp's spectacular FMV adventure, *Enemy Zero* (EO), here in the States due to bad focus testing. It's possible that some other American publisher may pick it up, but don't hold your breath. *Fighters Megamix*, AM2's spectacular 3D fighter, will not be released until June, and there's even a rumor that *VF3* may not even make it here due to high costs (the upgrade/memory cart itself costs around $60)!!

In related news, Team Andromeda is currently working on a sequel to *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* for release later this year, and get this—it's going to be an RPG and not a 3D shooter. Yuji Naka is also hard at work on *NiGHTS 2* set to debut in Japan in July, and the USA in September. The game is said to feature the same style of gameplay (2D control in a 3D environment) though this time with a vastly improved graphics engine that displays approximately three times as many polygons as the original.

WILLIAMS PROJECTS FOR '97

During a recent visit, Williams gave us the lowdown on a few of the games they will be showing at E3. For the N64 there will be *Quake* (yes!), *San Francisco Rush*, *Robotron X*, *War Gods*, *Wayne Gretzky 2*, *Joust X* and *MK4*. All games are 96-meg carts to be released in the third or fourth quarter. Williams also told us about an all new *Mortal Kombat* RPG that is being produced by John Tobias. *MK Mythologies: Sub-Zero's Adventures* for the PS and N64 will be a 4th-quarter release and will feature characters and locations from the *MK* universe. For the PlayStation Williams is currently developing a follow up to the *Williams Arcade Classics* CD and an all new 3-D version of Atari's legendary *Centipede*.

NINTENDO DROPS PRICE OF N64 AND DELAYS MORE GAMES! DOH!

Last week, Nintendo announced that the price of the Nintendo 64 in Japan will drop by a third from 24,800 Yen ($249 US) to 16,800 Yen ($135 US). Accordingly, NOA are set to announce a price drop for the American N64 at E3 to $149.99. Rumor has it that the 64DD might NOT be at the show, simply because Nintendo wants their N64 user base to grow before they bring out an add-on. As for *Zelda 64*, NOJ recently announced that the game will NOT be 64DD, and will instead be released on a 128-meg cart in the 4th quarter. Then, when the 64DD is released next year, Nintendo will release a new disk version of *Zelda* with more levels and features that weren't in the cart version.

In other 64DD news, Genyo Takeda, the man responsible for the 64DD and the N64 controller, recently told the Japanese press that there were 10 games in development for 64DD: *Zelda 64 Plus*, *Sim City*, *Mario Paint*, *Super Mario RPG 2*, *Fire Emblem 64*, *Pocket Monsters 64*, *Cabbage* (name will change), *Bass Turi No. 1 Part 2* (a fishing game), *Mother 3* and *Super Mario 64 2* (which will now feature different player-controlled characters, *SMB3* style).

Nintendo will ship the 64DD in the 4th quarter of 1997 in Japan, with between 2 to 3 titles available at launch. NOA is aiming for a 1st quarter 1998 release in the States, though that's expected to change.

Finally, Miyamoto has a new RPG in the works (the format is unknown) that is said to be Nintendo's attempt to counter Square's *FFVII* and Enix's *Dragon Quest 7*. Shyeah, right!

SONY NEWS

It's official. Enix has signed a deal with Sony of Japan stating that the highly anticipated *Dragon Quest 7* will be a PlayStation exclusive. The game is rumored to be in development for a Summer '98 release date in Japan, with a US version not scheduled until 1st quarter 1999. Also, Sony of America will release the US version under their own label and not Enix's, just like they do with Square.

Sony's first RPG, *Beyond the Beyond*, has sold over 100,000 copies to date, and Sony is very excited about the success of a relatively low-key RPG. Coupled with the success of *Suikoden*, this is good news for PS-owning RPG fans.

Tekken 3 will hit the PS later this year with an upgrade pack that enables the PS to perfectly emulate Namco's system 12 coin-op. *Wipeout 3* is also in development for later this year, with new tracks and new vehicles.

Finally, we have some preliminary information on PlayStation 2. Set to ship in 1999 in Japan, the rumored specs consist of a 64-bit 200 MHz CPU, a 64-bit graphics chip that can handle 5 to 10 million flat-shaded polygons per second, and 32 Megs of Ram! Already word reaches us that *FFVIII* is to debut on this new system, though no one is quite sure when.

FINAL ROUND...

Any Channel, the developers of *POed*, have ceased development of *POed 2* for the PS because they couldn't find a publisher to sell their game. Instead of making videogames, Any Channel is concentrating on developing a 3D rendering engine for the PC that is said to completely eliminate the need for 3D accelerator cards! Hmmm...

Westwood Studios still hasn't begun development on *Command & Conquer* for the N64, though they admit that technically it is possible. They are currently in the process of converting the *C&C* pseudo-sequel, *Red Alert*, and *Lands of Lore* to PS for a 4th quarter release.

Street Fighter Vs. X-Men on the Saturn will ship with a RAM upgrade cartridge and should be out by July. Capcom has pushed back the release date on *Resident Evil 2* from March to the end of the year in Japan. The US version is expected to hit some 2 to 3 months after that. The game will now come on 2 CDs and will be at least 50% bigger than the first. The Saturn version of *Resident Evil* is also in development. Subtitled *Resident Evil Dash*, the game will be released in Japan this Summer and will include features exclusive to the Saturn. Last but not least, Capcom confirmed that *Street Fighter III* WILL be converted to consoles, though no specific platforms were mentioned. Place your bets now, ladies and gentlemen!

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FROM A CAVE DEEP INSIDE AGOURA...



Dear Postie,

I can't believe the space they left you in February 1997 issue! You should take an ax to the Editor-in-Chief for that sin!

I would also like to reply to what Chris Jones said in that same issue. Yes, Chris, I comprehend what you're saying, but it proves you are a complete idiot. The reason you always play the role of a character in RPGs is because THAT'S WHAT MAKES THE FREAKIN' GENRE! You think about that, Chris: Role Playing Game. Geez!

Finally, I'd like to crown Takuhi as the king of GameFan. He's always reviewing the hottest RPGs and writes with intelligence!

Takuhi rules!

Sincerely,
Adam Lindsley
Ilwaco, WA

I received a number of heated letters that took offense to Chris Jones' "I hate RPGs" rant. All I can say is, take it easy guys, it's a free(ish) country. Mr. Jones is entitled to his opinion just like everyone else! Even if it is tragically and woefully misinformed. As for Feb '97, don't remind me. My psyche is scarred forever.

Dear Purveyor of Postography,

I get your mag often (I'm going to get a subscription) and I love the way you've been giving us updates on... *FINAL FANTASY VII*! Ahem. I own a PlayStation (naturally) and I can't wait till... *FINAL FANTASY VII* comes out. I love the *FF* series and this one looks like it rules! Anyway, a few questions on... *FINAL FANTASY VII*!

1. Are Cid, Tifa, Red XIII, Vincent, Caet Sith, and Yufi controllable party members?
2. Are there any more characters?
3. It's already out in Japan but, when will it be out here?
4. Will it be *Final Fantasy VII* or *IV* (I hope it is *VII*, it sounds more dramatic)?
5. If Shin-ra runs on Makoro energy, then why is it SEC (Shin-ra Electric Power Company)?
6. What kind of pencils does Tetsuya Nomura use?
7. Isn't Tifa cute?

That's it. Seven questions, ironic, huh?

Jeremy Thomas
Okmulgee, OK

This letter is just the tip of Final Fantasy *iceberg that smashed into my post-bag Titanic this month. Hopefully Takuhi's review should answer most of your questions, but for those of you who have worked yourself up into a unstoppable* FFVII *feeding frenzy, here's a few more FF nuggets.*

1. Yes. All of them.

2. I take it you mean playable characters other than the above? Not that I know of. But there is a Game Shark code that allows you to have Sephiros and P-Cloud in your party.

3. September the 7th is the date to mark on your calendar. Just think... that's nearly six months till you get to play an English version of FFVII. Bet you wished you read Japanese now, eh?

4. Good news Jeremy. Sony feels the game is now distinguished enough to retain the Japanese series title. FFVII it is!

5. Hmmm. That's a good question. Probably because Shin-Ra transforms the energy from the planet into electricity.

6. The lead kind.

7. Distractingly so. Just wait for the ending! And Jeremy, look up 'ironic' in the dictionary.

Dear Postmeister,

I'm really worried. You see, I've got a Saturn, and after a quick trip home to the States, I finally got a chance to see the PlayStation dominating the gaming scene first hand. For me, it was positively frightening. As stores that had demo machines set up, the Saturn demo either wasn't working or had some overly lackluster game running (the original *VF*?! Come on!) whereas the PS has games like *Star Gladiator, Twisted Metal 2* or *Tobal No. 1*. And I haven't even mentioned the N64.

Now I'm back in Japan and it seems that the Saturn is faltering here as well. It's most likely due to the promise of *FFVII* for the PS, but why are really cool anime-related games coming out for the PS only? I mean look at it: *Zeiram Zone, Ranma 1/2, Ghost in the Shell, Saber Marionette J* and *Battle Angel* to name a few. Okay, the Saturn got a *Macross* shooter, two *Evangelion* adventure games and a *Magic Knight RayEarth RPG* (I'm still waiting, Working Designs). The PS has the edge by far.

Now here's the kicker—I just read in a Japanese gaming mag something that made my heart skip a beat in a bad way—'*Dragon Quest VII*' and 'PlayStation'! If this doesn't spell the beginning of the end I don't know what does. Hello, Sega, if there was ever a reason to make a new *Phantasy Star* game, this is it!

Don't get me wrong, I love my Saturn. It's just I don't want to see my game system of choice get crushed by Sony's marketing muscle and Nintendo's popularity, or get left out in the cold by all the third parties. I've been down that road before with my Duo. It's not a pleasant drive.

So Posty, what do you make of this dilemma? Is the Saturn being overshadowed in almost every aspect by the PS? Does Sega have any aces up their sleeves to pull them through this crisis? I would greatly appreciate your input.

Dustin Blaine Javier
NAF Atsugi, Japan

Well, when you're right, you're right. I won't try to sugar coat it Dustin, the Saturn is definitely third in the rat race right now. The amount of times I've seen defunct Saturn displays in chain stores is truly distressing. But I don't think Sega is ready to give up the ghost quite yet.

Besides, why should the PlayStation's success stop you enjoying your system, or the numerous brilliant games available for it? Independence Day may well be the highest grossing film ever, but does that make it the best? Of course not. You're right not to underestimate the importance of the Enix/Sony deal, but I wouldn't worry too much about Sega losing third party support. Even though the Saturn has sold less units than the PS or N64, as Youchi Miyaji pointed out, the Sega user base is proportionately more active than Sony or Nintendo, meaning it is still profitable to produce a Saturn game. As for aces up sleeves, the new Bandai merger should bring a few surprises, and keep an eye out for VF3...

Dear Omnipotent Meister of Post,

Being one of the female gamers writing in, I would first like to compliment you on letting our voices be heard. The videogame community cannot ignore us! Now onto my rant. Who was it that said Tetsuya Nomura's *FFVII* art sucked?

They should be tarred and feathered! The new artist rules! His art is satisfying, smoothly shaded and yet detailed. Now the old *FF* artist on the other hand... Urgh. I viewed Yoshitaka Amano's first piece of art for *FFVII* (in your magazine, no less) and turned away in disgust. Cloud doesn't even look like a man! Aeris' hair is blond! The two artists shouldn't even be compared!

Next I want to say that I'm tired of readers writing in and bashing polygons because of their lack of personality. Did any of these readers ever see *Mario 64*? Or *FFVII*? I think there is more expression in these two games than any of their predecessors. I for one believe that the silky smooth animation of polygons, realistic movement, and 3-D capabilities more than outweigh their 'lack of personality'. Now on to the questions.

1. Is it possible that Arika could port *Street Fighter EX* onto the N64? It's completely polygonal, so it seems possible... Is it even going to arcades, or just the PlayStation? If it's in arcades, could it compete with Model 3?
2. Is *StarFox 64* going to have two player capabilities like *StarFox 2*? Two player team, I mean.
3. Is it remotely possible that Team Andromeda will join GDNet? Imagine *Panzer Dragoon 64*!!
4. The last time Takuhi mentioned the *FFVII* frame rate it was running at 15 fps. Will it run faster in the final version? I hope so.
5. What ever happened to *Legacy of Kain*? You guys never gave it a viewpoint!
6. What ever became of *Terminus*? A long time ago you said you'd be bringing a big review on it? Is it good?

Oh, and even though I like anime, I don't like *Sailor Moon*.
Thanks,
Brielle Myers
LA

Well peel my tangerines! A pro-polygon letter! I agree with you, Brielle, polygon graphics are just as effective an aesthetic medium as hand drawn art. If a polygon model lacks character or personality, it's the designer and animator who are at fault, not the medium. Plus polygon graphics have the obvious advantage of creating a 3D world. Having said that, polygons will never be able to completely replace 2D art, and you know what? I don't think they have to. There's enough room in this industry for everyone.

1. Capcom is an N64 developer, so it is possible. SFEX is currently doing the rounds in the arcades with a PS version already on its way (featuring enhancements and new characters).

2. There is a multiplayer mode in StarFox 64, *but I don't think it's team play. Vs. only, so it's "Zabz-Zaba, Odulabua" to that idea.*

3. I would have said no, but after recovering from seeing Treasure code an N64 game, anything is possible!

4. Most of the game runs at 30 fps (some of the sub-games run at 60 fps) but the battle scenes still run at 15 fps. Be advised, however, that those 15 fps are filled with some of the most insane effects known to man.

5. Er, there was a reason why we never viewpointed Legacy of Kain, *I just can't remember it. Still, out of this mishap comes a world first! A Postmeister viewpoint!*



Yes! At last! Those GameFan do-gooders thought they could keep you safe from me BUT THEY WERE WRONG! Here I am baby! In the flesh! Telling it like it should be told. No holds barred, in-yer-face, mother truckin' honesty! I don't like a game, I destroy it! Ha! See how that works baby! Yeah, that's right. I'm Accolade's worst nightmare. I make T•HQ sweat at night. Mindscape has a $50K contract out on my head! And you know what? I don't care!! 'Cuz I'm just plain KERAZY! Mwa-ha-ha-ha! Oh yeah, *Kain*. It's er, well, it's kind of... uh... I didn't play it.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	9	9	8	90

6. Terminus *was to be Scavenger's first game to use their NERB technology; 2D sprites drawn from every conceivable angle to appear like true 3D characters. It is still in development and the moment we hear more, so will you.*

Postmeister!

In the January issue of GameFan, someone wrote in about how upset they were that Square was working for Sony now. You replied that the fact they were making games at all was the important thing, and that as long as the games were good, that was what counts. At the time, I was quite inclined to agree with you. As a Saturn owner who doesn't really care about Sony and Nintendo (well, I do have a soft spot for Miyamoto's works) I tilted my head back and laughed, "Ha Ha!!!" But now the tables are turned. It's *Go Go Troublemakers*, and it's TREASURE DOING AN N64 GAME??!! NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO (*Snip! Sorry, a page of Os is a bit excessive*).

And the graphics are rendered! Everything they've done before was hand-drawn. I prefer hand-drawn art to renders 100%. I am a big Treasure fan and bought a Saturn just for *Guardian Heroes* (although if I had played *NiGHTS* before, it would have sold it to me instead). I thought Treasure would continue to work on the Saturn; *Silhouette Mirage* is still in the works, right?
Thanks,
Michael Stearns
Ellensburg, WA

Thanks for the letter, Michael. Sorry we had to edit it down a little but paper isn't cheap, you know... Well, yes, we were all a little shocked to hear that Treasure was developing for Nintendo (albeit through ENIX) but you've got to admit, it's pretty exciting news. System loyalty is admirable, but aren't you even curious to see what Treasure is going to do with the N64? No word on Silhouette Mirage *(it's still in development), but keep in mind that Enix's recent announcement means a Saturn version of* Yuke Yuke Troublemakers *is a distinct possibility.*

Dear Postmeister,

I'm a brand new subscriber. Please print this letter or write back to me.

1. Are *Sonic the Fighters*, *Indy 500* or *Gunblade New York* coming to Saturn?
2. Would *Gunblade New York* use the Stunner?
3. Will there be a *NiGHTS 2*, *Virtua Cop 3* or a true *Daytona 2*?
4. Will there ever be an *Ecco the Dolphin* or a *Toe Jam and Earl* for Saturn?
5. Is *Waverunner*, *Sega Touring Car* or Jaleco's *Super GT 2nd* coming to Saturn?
6. Will there ever be a Saturn version of *Jurassic Park: The Lost World* or *Batman and Robin*?
7. In your Feb issue you said that Crystal Dynamics is making a *Gex 2* and a *Pandemonium 2* for PlayStation only. Please tell them they should release those two games for Saturn.
8. Will there be any more *Sonic* games for the Saturn?
9. Will there ever be a Sonic Kart game for Saturn like *Sonic Drift 2* on Game Gear?
10. Last, is there a *Tomb Raider 2*? If so, will it be out for Saturn?

Thank you for your time,
Eric Gustafson,
Hinsdale, IL

Wait, let me guess. You own a PlayStation, right? Geez, what do I look like to you, a Sega game schedule list? But since you're new... I guess I'll play ball. Just this once, you hear?

1 & 2. All three games have been announced for Saturn, and should turn up later this year. I'd imagine that Gunblade *will be Stunner compatible, unless Sega releases a new light gun peripheral (unlikely).*

3. NiGHTS 2 *is under consideration, although there is nothing solid at the moment. No word on* Virtua Cop 3 *or* Daytona 2, *although AM2's latest Model 3 coin-ops (*House of the Dead *and* Scud Race*) can be considered as pseudo-sequels, and they're both due for Saturn conversions at the end of this year.*

4. Probably not, but if there was, my money would be on Ecco *over* Toe Jam & Earl.

5. Touring Car *has been announced, but nothing on those other two.*

6. Lost Worlds *is being developed for the Saturn by Appaloosa, and if you mean the new* Batman & Robin *movie, I wouldn't be surprised if a Saturn movie license turned up. Probably by Acclaim.*

7. Er, okay.

8. Sonic Extreme *is being developed by Sega of Japan as we speak.*

9. Sonic Drift 2 *wasn't very good so don't hold your breath.*

10. Good news! There is a Tomb Raider 2 *in development for Saturn (as well as PlayStation), and Core wants to use the VF3 upgrade cart to make it as spectacular as possible. Well, the more polygons they use on Lara's rear the better, that's what I say...*

Well that about wraps up my bag of goodies this month. You keep writin', ya hear?

Write to me or I'll run for President!
The Postmeister
5137 Clareton Dr. Suite 210
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

GAMEFAN: UP TO THE MINUTE

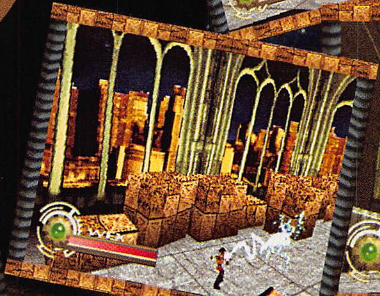
As usual, we just can't close an issue of GameFan without squeezing in every last bit of goods. These Wild 9 shots arrived just hours before we shipped film and so, we booted a house ad and voila! Wild 9!

Coming 4th Qtr. for the Saturn and PlayStation!



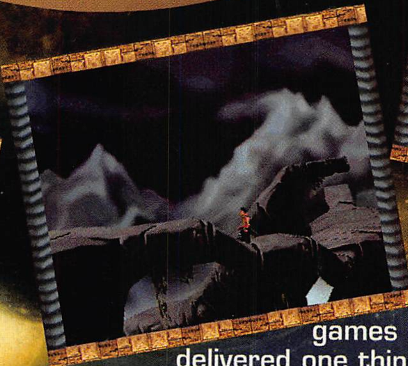


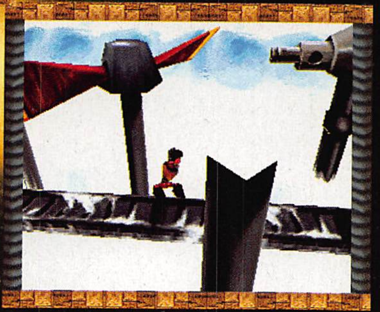
there's some heavy camera work goin' on here!













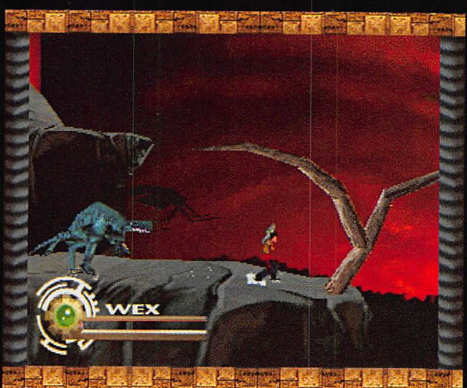
Shiny games have always delivered one thing—a new and refreshing gaming experience. Clones, they do not make. They're pioneers, dad-gum-it! Their latest experiment, Wild 9 is still a ways out (4th Q) as the team tackles the formidable challenge they've once again laid out for themselves.

Judging by these screens I believe it's safe to assume that the camera work in W9 promises to be absolutely phenomenal. The storyline I'm told, is equally capacious, with TV and action figure tie-ins already on the horizon. We'll dive deep in to W9 the moment we get a preview copy. Until then enjoy the latest batch of actual screens we've seen in many moons.



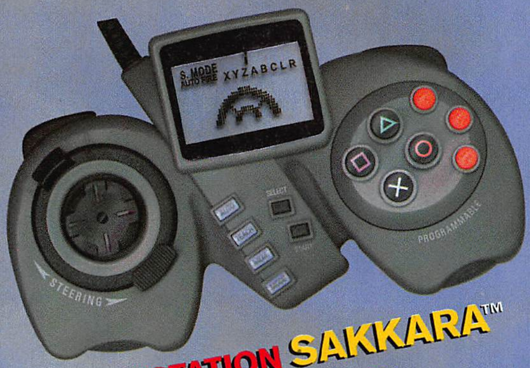






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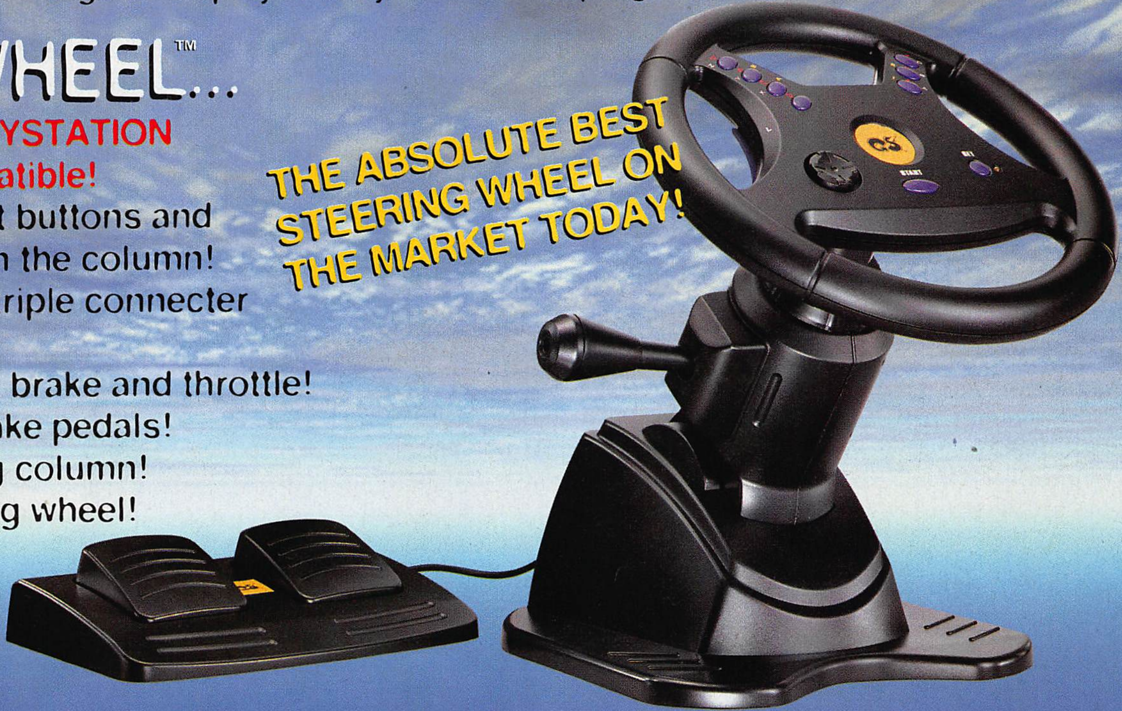
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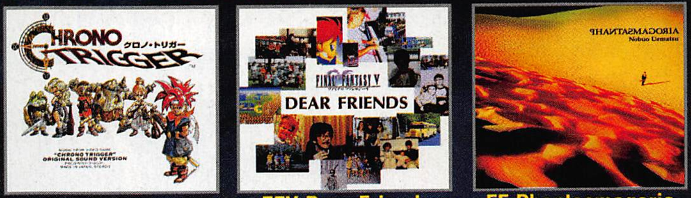
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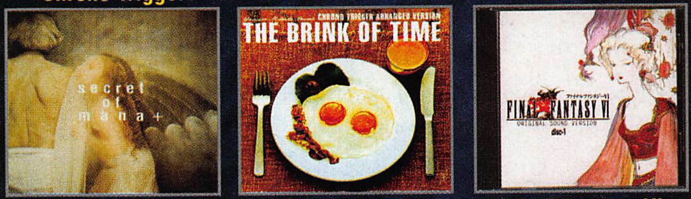


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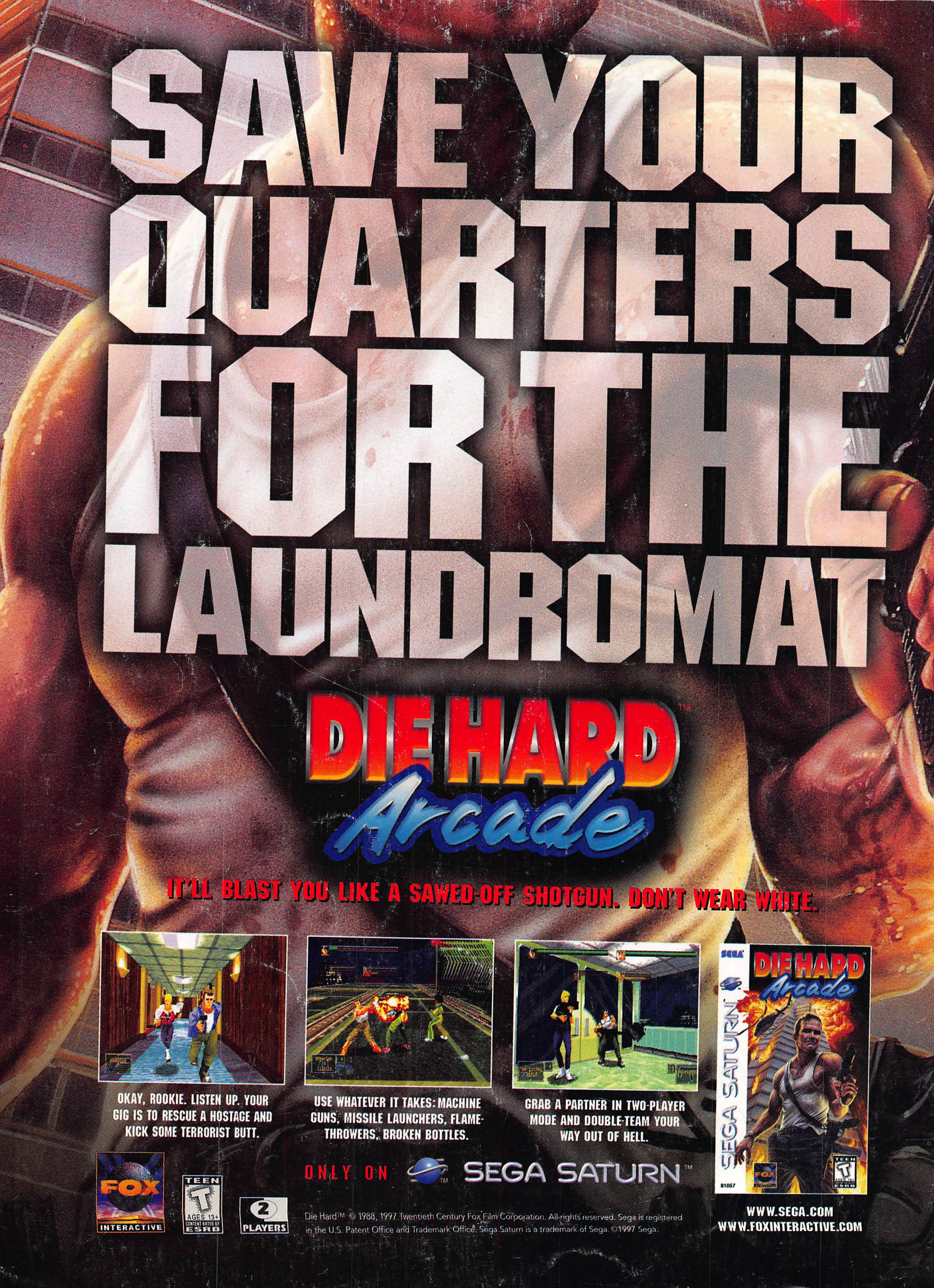
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